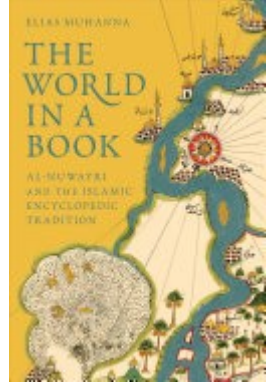
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THE WORLD IN A BOOK
AL-MUWAYRI AND THE ISLAMIC ENCYCLOPEDIC TRADITION

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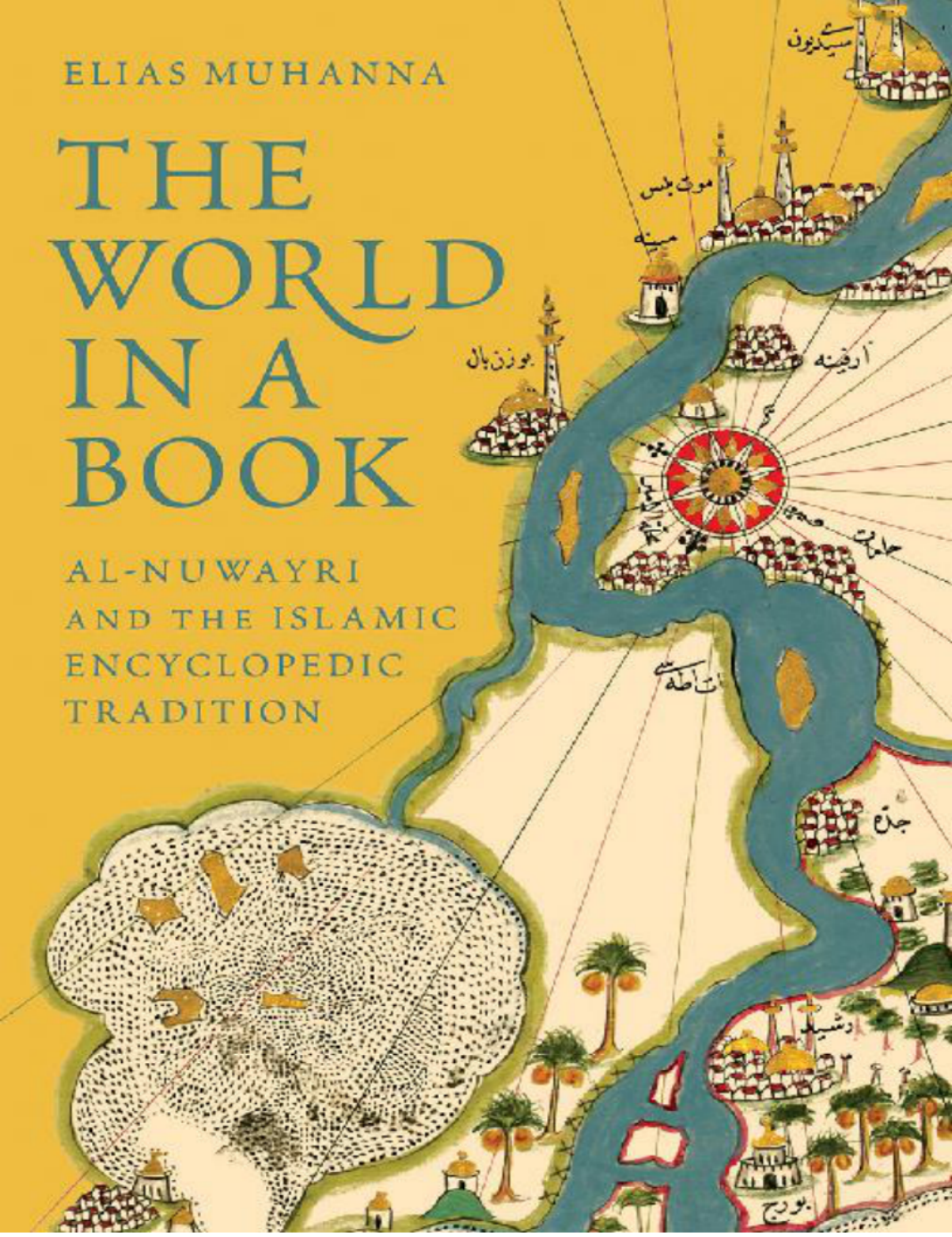

THE WORLD IN A BOOK

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AL-NUWAYRI AND THE ISLAMIC ENCYCLOPEDIC TRADITION

ELIAS MUHANNA

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For my mother and father

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ABBREVIATIONS, TRANSLITERATION, AND DATES

Nihāya = Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, eds. Aḥmad Zakī Pasha et al. (Cairo: al-Muʾassasa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1923–97).

DKI = Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya edition of the *Nihāya*, viz. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, ed. Mufīd Qumayḥa et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004).

Ultimate Ambition = In the notes, this abbreviation refers to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition: A Compendium of Knowledge from the Classical Islamic World*, translated and abridged by Elias Muhanna (New York: Penguin, 2016). Outside of the notes, the abbreviation refers generally to the original work, not any particular edition or translation.

References to books (*funūn*), sections (*aqsām*), and chapters (*abwāb*) in the *Ultimate Ambition* are signaled using the symbol (§). For example, §1.2.3 refers to book 1, section 2, chapter 3. See appendix A for the *Ultimate Ambition's* table of contents.

Q = al-Qurʾān

AH = After *hijra.* Death dates are given according to both *hijrī* and common era (CE) calendars. All other dates are CE except when quoting from primary sources.

Arabic quotations are transliterated in cases where vocabulary or syntax is noteworthy. Words that have romanized English acceptations (e.g. madrasa, imam, Abbasid, Mamluk) are not italicized or transliterated with macrons or underdots.

THE WORLD IN A BOOK

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS A SMALL BOOK about a very large book, composed in the early fourteenth century by an Egyptian bureaucrat and scholar named Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī. After a high-flying career in the financial administration of the Mamluk Empire, al-Nuwayrī retired to a quiet life of study in Cairo, devoting his remaining years to a project of literary self-edification. This took the form of a compendium of universal knowledge entitled *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* (*Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*). Containing over two million words in thirty-one volumes, the *Ultimate Ambition* was a work of enormous scope, arranged into five principal divisions: (i) the cosmos, comprising the earth, heavens, stars, planets, and meteorological phenomena; (ii) the human being, containing material on hundreds of subjects including physiology, genealogy, poetry, women, music, wine, amusements and pastimes, political rule, and chancery affairs; (iii) the animal world; (iv) the plant world; and (v) a universal history, beginning with Adam and Eve, and continuing all the way through the events of al-Nuwayrī's life. Perusing the *Ultimate Ambition*'s pages, one comes across such varied topics as the substance of clouds; the innate dispositions of the inhabitants of different climes; poetry about every part of the human body; descriptions of scores of animals, birds, flowers, and trees; qualities and characteristics of good rulers and their advisors; administrative minutiae concerning promissory notes, joint partnerships, commercial enterprises, loans, gifts, donations, charity, transfers of property, and much more.

Why did al-Nuwayrī compose this work? What disciplines did it encompass and what models, sources, and working methods informed its composition? How was it received by al-Nuwayrī's contemporaries as well as by later readers in the Islamic world and Europe? These are the principal questions of this book. Through a study of al-Nuwayrī's work, I aim to shed light on a tradition of Arabic encyclopedism—of which the *Ultimate Ambition* was one of the most ambitious exemplars—that witnessed its fullest flowering in Egypt and Syria during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. The contents, methods of cross-referencing and synthesis, and internal architecture exhibited in this book reveal much about the sources of authoritative knowledge available to al-Nuwayrī and to other large-scale compilers at this time, while the reconstruction of his social and professional environment

offers us a glimpse into the world of the Mamluk civilian elite, an educated class of religious scholars, government bureaucrats, and litterateurs who were the main producers and consumers of this literature.

By virtue of its multifaceted character, al-Nuwayrī's compendium has been exploited by readers in different ways in the course of its history. The manuscript record shows that it was copied for several centuries after al-Nuwayrī's death; other compilers quoted liberally from it and historians used it as a source for their own chronicles. In Europe, the *Ultimate Ambition* became known as early as the seventeenth century, when several manuscripts found their way to Leiden and Paris. The first complete edition of the text was begun in Egypt in 1923 by Aḥmad Zakī Pasha and completed in the 1960s, but its final volumes were only published in 1997. In more recent times, historians of the Mamluk Empire have drawn upon the *Ultimate Ambition* because of al-Nuwayrī's extensive treatment of the events of his own lifetime. With few exceptions, the work has been approached instrumentally, as a source for other scholarly projects rather than an object of inquiry in and of itself.

My interest in the *Ultimate Ambition* has been motivated from the outset by a curiosity about why this time and place in Islamic history witnessed an explosion of compilatory texts: dictionaries, manuals, onomastica, anthologies, and compendia of all shapes and sizes. In earlier decades, such texts were generally seen as tokens of intellectual stultification and a lack of originality—the baroque sputterings of a civilization content to collect and compile the writings of earlier centuries. In recent years, the growth of scholarship on late medieval Islamic history has led to a recognition of the important role played by compilers like al-Nuwayrī, whose works served as the primary custodians of the Islamic tradition in the early modern period and remain among the most important interpreters of that tradition for modern scholarship and Islamic thought.

Still, the motivations and working methods underlying this movement remain little understood, as are the ways that the Mamluk compilers positioned themselves vis-à-vis the archive they were assembling. I take up this subject in chapter 1 in the course of situating al-Nuwayrī and his text within the landscape of encyclopedic production around the turn of the fourteenth century. As a bureaucrat, scholar, and aspiring litterateur who traveled all around the empire and held various administrative offices, al-Nuwayri's biography reflects many of the forces that shaped cultural attitudes towards large-scale compilation at this time. What it does not seem to reflect at all is a fear of civilizational catastrophe brought on by the Mongol conquests, which was long thought to be a principal cause for encyclopedic production in the Mamluk Empire. While the trope of the encyclopedia as a defender and guarantor of civilizational heritage is certainly widely attested in Renaissance and Enlightenment intellectual history, I propose that it did not motivate the Mamluk compilers to write their books.

Rather, encyclopedists such as al-Nuwayrī were moved by other factors entirely, chief among them the feeling of an overcrowding of authoritative knowledge in Cairo and Damascus, the great school cities of the empire. The explosion of investment in higher education and the changing migration patterns of scholars in West and Central Asia had a transformative impact on the sociology of scholarship at this time, making new texts available for study and prompting the formation of new genres and knowledge practices. In chapter 2, I present a bird's-eye view of al-Nuwayrī's work—its internal arrangement, structural divisions, and overall composition—comparing it to other Mamluk encyclopedic texts as well as earlier exemplars within the adab tradition. What emerges from this panoramic view of the work is a sense of how dramatically it brought together compositional elements from different genres—the classical literary anthology, the chronicle, the cosmographical compendium, and the scribal manual—and fashioned something altogether new by combining them. This generic hybridity was not unique to the *Ultimate Ambition*; I argue that the processes of summary, concatenation, and expansion on display in al-Nuwayrī's work can be seen as productive of a diverse range of encyclopedic forms in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries.

In chapter 3, I explore the influence of the scholarly milieu on encyclopedic compilation. The cities of the Mamluk Empire were flourishing centers of learning: in the mid-fourteenth century, there were nearly one hundred colleges in Damascus, while, a century later, Cairo could boast of seventy colleges operating on its famous Bayn al-Qaṣrayn street alone. As scholars have shown, these institutions of learning produced and consumed an astonishing range and quantity of books. Again, al-Nuwayrī is an ideal guide to this world, as he was a resident overseer of two important scholarly institutions, the Naṣiriyya Madrasa and the Manṣūrī Hospital. I address the eclectic range of subjects being taught in this environment at this time and the challenges that this eclecticism posed for reconciling diverse authorities in all-encompassing encyclopedic works. After a discussion of al-Nuwayrī's principal sources, I conclude by discussing the epistemological ecumenism of the *Ultimate Ambition*: the ways in which al-Nuwayrī managed diverse and often contradictory truth claims.

Having explored the world of scholarly institutions, I turn to the parallel world of imperial institutions, chanceries, and financial bureaus in chapter 4. Insofar as many Mamluk compilers served as clerks in the administrative nervous system of the empire, they were particularly attuned to the processes of centralization and consolidation that transformed the politics of their time. Extensive portions of *Ultimate Ambition* were written with such an audience in mind, and serve as a kind of testament to the connections between encyclopedism and the imperial state, as observed in other historical contexts by scholars such as Trevor Murphy, Jason König, Greg Woolf, and Timothy Whitmarsh. I consider the differences between scholarly and administrative

knowledge, which reflect not merely a distinction in subject matter but a different epistemological valence and standard of corroboration.

In chapter 5, I address the strategies of collation, edition, and source management used to produce large compilations in the Mamluk period. What working methods did copyists use to assemble multivolume manuscripts? How did one distinguish one's own copies of authoritative texts from those of other copyists? What kind of training was necessary to become a successful copyist? Al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* offers us an ideal opportunity to consider these questions, as several autograph volumes of the text have been preserved, which allow us to reconstruct its composition history, shedding light on the mechanics of encyclopedic compilation in a world before print. Furthermore, al-Nuwayrī addresses the education and practice of the copyist in his enormous discussion of secretaryship, which lies at the heart of the *Ultimate Ambition* and in certain ways is its raison d'être.

My book concludes with a discussion of the Islamic and European reception of al-Nuwayrī's compendium. Which of his contemporaries read this work and cited it? What portions of it were of greatest interest to European orientalists? Focusing primarily on the Dutch reception, I explore the engagements with the *Ultimate Ambition* by such figures as Jacobus Golius, Johannes Heyman, Albert Schultens, and others, which set the stage for the modern edition and publication of the book by Aḥmad Zakī Pāshā in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE

ENCYCLOPEDISM IN THE MAMLUK EMPIRE

IN A CHAPTER ABOUT WINE and its afflictions in his vast compendium of knowledge, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī noted that among the beverage's many evils was its smell, which lingered on one's breath for days and required the drinker who feared scandal to remain at home until it dissipated. After exploring the legal dimensions of the Islamic prohibition on alcohol, al-Nuwayrī curiously offered his reader a recipe for a special tonic that cleared up the traces of wine on the drinker's breath. A compound of colocynth, fennel, galingale, elecampane, cloves, gum arabic, and rosewater, the tonic's intricate recipe seemed to promise results, and al-Nuwayrī himself vouched for its efficacy, remarking: "Indeed, it eliminates the smell of alcohol from one's mouth, just as they claim."[1]

Like much of al-Nuwayrī's book, the recipe for this concoction was copied from an older text and interpolated among the thousands of excerpts, quotations, and observations that formed his work, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*. A reader unfamiliar with one of the recipe's ingredients would find, in other corners of the book, discussions devoted to its beneficial properties drawn from Galenic and Avicennan humoral medicine, as well as examples of Arabic poetry describing its color or smell, and perhaps an ancient magical-agronomical technique for cultivating it in one's garden. Splicing together materials of diverse antiquity and provenance, the *Ultimate Ambition* was a textual cabinet of curiosities, a paper museum containing literary artifacts from a huge archive of sources.

The gathering of knowledge from different disciplines and discourses within a single book was not al-Nuwayrī's innovation. The Egyptian and Syrian territories of the Mamluk Empire witnessed the production of encyclopedic texts on a scale unprecedented in Islamic history. In addition to the *Ultimate Ambition* were other compendia by figures such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, and Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī,

whose books spanned many volumes and contained material on diverse subjects, from history and geography to astronomy and zoology. Similarly comprehensive in outlook yet more modest in size, books on the classification of the sciences outlined a curriculum of study for the novice, while single-subject reference works provided targeted access to specialized information. In traditional genres as well as some new ones, a vogue for collection and classification reigned.

This backdrop of bookish activity helps to make some sense of al-Nuwayrī's decision to retire from a successful career in the upper echelons of the imperial government in order to spend the rest of his life writing an encyclopedia. Mamluk Cairo was a city of colleges, with hundreds of educational institutions catering to a population of local and itinerant scholars and students. Booksellers did brisk business in didactic texts, primers, epitomes, commentaries, and other types of works offering shortcuts to navigating the accumulated archive of Islamic thought. A learned individual like al-Nuwayrī, possessed of fine penmanship, bookmaking skills, and a good knowledge of classical texts could earn a respectable living copying sought-after manuscripts and producing compilations that curated the canon in different ways.

On the face of it, the *Ultimate Ambition* does not seem to have been a book designed to sell widely. The scale of the work suggests that it could hardly have served the same function as many other popular compilations—as a practical textbook, for instance, or a compact anthology of entertaining anecdotes. The pagination of the autograph manuscript—many volumes of which are preserved in Leiden and Paris—puts the entire work in thirty-one volumes, the size of a worthy personal library, hardly a *vade mecum*.[2] On the other hand, the *Ultimate Ambition* was not unique in its elephantine proportions. Cairo's book markets contained works of all sizes, from the tiniest Qurans and collections of devotional prayers designed for portability, to enormous chronicles probably destined for library use. These latter works were exorbitantly expensive but, like any luxury good, the prices for manuscripts fluctuated and occasionally collapsed in times of economic hardship and ecological disaster. Reports of personal and institutional libraries containing many hundreds or thousands of volumes are not uncommon.

What was al-Nuwayrī's purpose in composing the *Ultimate Ambition*? This is the main preoccupation of this chapter. Did he aim to produce a manual for fellow scribes? Or was he seized by a fear that the Mongol armies would soon ravage the colleges and libraries of the Mamluk Empire and lay waste to the intellectual heritage of Islam? Evidence for a variety of motivations may be marshaled from such a voluminous text, but the subtle calculus underlying an author's decision to compose a particular book is rarely straightforward to ascertain. Beyond the immediate level of prefatory remarks and other authorial confidences, there are the circumstances of educational and professional experiences to ponder, the cultural cachet

attached to certain types of intellectual activity at this time, along with narrower questions of compositional models, access to sources, and intended readerships.

In the case of the *Ultimate Ambition* and other contemporary works examined here, there is a further interpretive challenge to address, which has to do with the problem of genre. Texts recognizable as "encyclopedic" in one way or another are attested in nearly every discipline and textual category in Arabic literature, including lexicons, poetry anthologies, biographical dictionaries, historical chronicles, collections of legal responsa, miscellanies, pharmacopeias, and more. Despite growing interest in such texts, a theoretical framework for the study of Islamic encyclopedism has yet to be elaborated.[3] In a sense, this is the larger enterprise to which this book seeks to contribute. However, it is also a problem to be confronted at the outset of the discussion.

For the present purposes, exploring the matter of why al-Nuwayrī and his contemporaries produced the kinds of works they did requires attending to several deceptively simple questions. What exactly is meant by the term "encyclopedia" in the study of Mamluk literature? Does it presuppose the existence of a genre, or rather a set of compositional features shared by different texts and intellectual traditions? In either case, what are its distinguishing traits and what sets it apart from earlier varieties of encyclopedic writing in the Arabic-Islamic tradition? This chapter will begin to address these questions in the course of situating al-Nuwayrī and his *Ultimate Ambition* within the literary landscape of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

DEFINITIONS

While the history of encyclopedic writing in the medieval European tradition has been well charted from its origins in Isidore of Seville's seventh-century *Etymologiae* to the massive thirteenth-century *Speculum maius* of Vincent de Beauvais and beyond, the history of Islamic encyclopedism remains comparatively obscure. In a 1966 article about encyclopedias in the Arab world, the French scholar Charles Pellat claimed that, to his knowledge, no such studies had ever been written on the subject.[4] In fact, Pellat had been scooped over a hundred years earlier by the Austrian orientalist Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, who produced an initial survey of encyclopedias written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish drawn principally from the great seventeenth-century bibliographical compendium by Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1067/1657), *Resolving the Doubts Concerning the Names of Books and Disciplines* (*Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*).[5]

Combing through this catalog of fifteen thousand books, Hammer-Purgstall assembled a list of 132 encyclopedic texts written over the course of a millennium. The topical range of his list was expansive but centered on the Arabic classifications of the sciences and propaedeutic texts that began to

appear in profusion in the tenth century. Heterogeneous in form and character, these works included systematic curricula of the disciplines such as *The Enumeration of the Sciences* (*Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿulūm*) by the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and dictionaries of technical terms such as *The Keys to the Sciences* (*Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*) by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Khwārizmī (fl. 366/976). Also of interest to Hammer-Purgstall were programs for the integration of the rational and religious sciences and bibliographic works that cataloged the basic texts of different disciplines. Among the latter was the masterwork of Kâtip Çelebi himself, whom Hammer-Purgstall described as "the Hermes Trismegistus of the new Oriental sciences: the Diderot, Bacon, and Meusel" of the Islamic world.6

The history of encyclopedism elaborated by Pellat a century and a half later was rooted in a different sphere: the tradition of *adab*, a body of literary works containing entertaining and edifying discussions on a great array of social, political, ethical, and natural historical topics. One of the oldest genres in classical Arabic literature, the earliest sense of adab was connected with the idea of habit or custom, a standard of conduct within Bedouin Arab society based on ancestral precedent.7 With the emergence of urban polities following the Islamic conquests, adab came to be associated with the refined culture of the city. To possess good adab meant to be well mannered, well dressed, well spoken, and well rounded. The model litterateur (*adīb*) was—if not a walking encyclopedia—certainly an individual who had something apposite and witty to say about nearly any topic.

Exemplifying this standard of erudite civility was a repertoire of Arabic poetic, anecdotal, and proverbial materials, the study of which was essential to the formation of the adīb. The books that gathered these materials for the purpose of both instructing and delighting readers came to constitute a literary genre known by the same name as the social ideal they cultivated. Adab literature grew more expansive over time and its purview extended beyond the philological disciplines—grammar, lexicography, prosody, and rhetoric—to include a wide-ranging knowledge of ancient Arabian poetry and lore as well as the literary and philosophical heritage of the Iranian, Indian, and Hellenistic worlds.

Surveying Arabic literary history from its beginnings through its nineteenth-century renaissance, Pellat sketched the outlines of an encyclopedic canon springing from adab's central virtue of omnivorous erudition, epitomized by the idea of "taking a little of everything" (*al-akhdh min kull shayʾ bi-ṭaraf*) in the words of the Iraqi polymath al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–69) whose own oeuvre displayed enormous topical breadth and diversity.8 Of his extant works, *The Book of Animals* (*Kitāb al-ḥayawān*) comes closest to what we might call an encyclopedia, in spite of its author's signature digressions that blend the treatment of his zoological theme with long excursuses on other philosophical, historical, theological, and sociological topics.9

Rather more systematic in form and programmatic in content than al-Jāḥiẓ's compositions were the works of his contemporary Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889)—especially his *Quintessential Reports* (*ʿUyūn al-akhbār*)—which inaugurated a tradition of adab compendia that aimed to provide an overview of the topics that any aspirant to a certain status of cultural literacy would be expected to know.[10] These works were organized into several chapters, each dealing with a specific theme and containing an assortment of materials. For example, *Quintessential Reports* contained ten chapters on the topics of sovereignty, war, rulership, traits and morals, knowledge, piety, friends, achieving one's ends, food, and women. Such wide-ranging overviews were particularly valued by the class of administrators and secretaries (*kuttāb,* sing. *kātib*) of the Abbasid Empire, whom Ibn Qutayba described in his philological manual, *The Secretary's Art* (*Adab al-kātib*), as the descendants of a great tradition of Near Eastern secretaryship:

> The Persians always used to say, "He who is not knowledgeable about diverting water into channels, digging out courses for irrigation streams and blocking up disused well-shafts; about the changes in the length of the days as they increase and decrease, the revolution of the sun, the rising-places of the stars and the state of the new moon as it begins to wax, and its subsequent phases; about the various weights in use; about the measurement of triangles, four-sided figures and polygons; about the construction of bridges and aqueducts, irrigation machines and water wheels; and about the materials used by various artisans, and the fine points of financial accounting—such a person must be considered only partly-qualified as a secretary."[11]

The different visions of Islamic encyclopedism presented in Hammer-Purgstall and Pellat's accounts are a consequence of the nebulous character of the phenomenon they were investigating. The term "encyclopedia" is capacious and has been used in different ways throughout its history, beginning in the European tradition from which it derives. Of recent vintage, the word first appeared in Latin in the late fifteenth century, coined by scholars to designate an ideal of humanist education, an approach to learning that stressed the unity of all knowledge. Until the mid-twentieth century, historians, following the opinion of those who coined the term, believed that it derived from an ancient Greek word meaning the "circle of learning" (*enkuklopaideia*). It was later established that this word was a corruption of the Greek formulation *enkuklios paideia*, meaning "general knowledge" or "well-rounded education."[12]

The association of the term "encyclopedia" with the features that define it in modern usage—e.g., objectivity, multidisciplinarity, comprehensiveness, systematic organization—did not take place until the eighteenth century, with the publication of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* in 1710, the text that would serve as one of the inspirations for Diderot and d'Alembert's great

Encyclopédie in 1751.[13] Between the date of its earliest appearance in the late fifteenth century and the emergence of the modern encyclopedic reference book, very few works called themselves "encyclopedias," and those that did were not reference books but rather texts that elucidated the relationships between different branches of knowledge.[14]

The fact that the word was not often used in book titles before the late seventeenth century has not prevented scholars from tracing a history of European encyclopedism through the late classical and medieval periods, identifying works by such figures as Cassiodorus and Isidore of Seville as encyclopedias *avant la lettre*, which aimed "to preserve what was useful from ancient learning for the training of monks and preachers . . . and to bring together and transmit an essential core of knowledge."[15] Several centuries later, Europe witnessed a second wave of encyclopedism in the production of famous works like Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum maius* and the *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus.[16] Taken together, these texts would come to be regarded as constituting a medieval encyclopedic canon prefiguring the modern genre, the anachronistic designation having long been accepted by historians as a matter of convenience.

As in the medieval European context, there is no straightforward equivalent for the word "encyclopedia" in classical Arabic literature. The terms *dāʾirat al-maʿārif* and *mawsūʿa*, which are used in modern parlance, did not emerge until the late nineteenth century. *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif* means "the circle of objects of knowledge," and would therefore seem to be a calque patterned on the erroneous etymology of the word "encyclopedia." The first usage of this term appeared in the title of a pioneering reference work modeled on Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* by the Lebanese scholar Buṭrus al-Bustānī (d. 1883), a leading figure of the nineteenth-century Arab Renaissance (*Nahḍa*). His *Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif* had the bilingual subtitle "*Encyclopédie arabe*: *It Being a General Dictionary on Every Subject and Issue*" (*wa-huwa qāmūs ʿāmm li-kull fann wa-maṭlab*) and was published in installments. Organized alphabetically and furnished with illustrations, al-Bustānī's encyclopedia was a landmark work of the *Nahḍa*, with articles on Islamic history, classical Arabic poets, Greek mythology, and modern technological inventions like the telephone. The first six volumes appeared between 1876 and 1882, and after al-Bustānī's death in 1883 five more volumes would appear under the supervision of his sons and other members of his family. The last volume made it through the letter *ʿayn* (about two thirds of the way through the Arabic alphabet) and was published in 1900.[17]

The more common term for "encyclopedia" in modern Arabic, "*mawsūʿa*," derives from the verb *wasuʿa,* meaning "to be wide, spacious; to encompass, comprehend." It has a curious history. The word seems to have been coined somewhat inadvertently by one of al-Bustānī's contemporaries, the Lebanese scholar and journalist, Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī (d. 1906), in an issue of the medical periodical *al-Ṭabīb*, which he edited. Discussing a well-known

compendium by the Ottoman scholar Ṭāshkopruzāde entitled *The Key to Happiness and the Lamp of Mastery with Regard to the Topics of the Sciences* (*Miftāḥ al-saʿāda wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyāda fī mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm*), al-Yāzijī misquoted the subtitle of the work—"*mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm*" (*Topics of the Sciences*)—as "*mawsūʿāt al-ʿulūm*," which he interpreted to mean something roughly equivalent to "the contents of the sciences."[18] Later on, the Egyptian scholar Aḥmad Zakī, who was responsible for the edition of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* among other encyclopedic texts, seized upon al-Yāzijī's term and used it in the title of his own short treatise on Islamic encyclopedism.[19] Like the term "encyclopedia" itself, which was thought to derive from a nonexistent Ancient Greek word, the Arabic *mawsūʿa* may also have been born as a result of a scholarly misreading.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND ENCYCLOPEDISM

If problems of definition are present in the European context, it is not surprising that they should be compounded upon entering a different intellectual tradition altogether. Indeed, one would be justified in wondering what utility the term "encyclopedia" has for the analysis of texts in Arabic, Chinese, Persian, or Malay when its status as a stable category in European literature—particularly before the mid-eighteenth century—is tenuous. In other words, just how translatable is the notion of an encyclopedia, if one is unsure of what it means in the first place?

In this book, I follow scholars of various intellectual traditions in pursuing an approach to my subject based on the concept of *encyclopedism*, rather than the genre of the *encyclopedia*. Encyclopedism is a more abstract idea than the encyclopedia, but one that is also interpretively more useful. It suggests a spectrum, as Jason König and Greg Woolf have proposed, upon which we might situate a variety of works belonging to different premodern genres and possessing different principles of order, structure, focus, agenda, audience, and modes of reading. What these works have in common—which is to say, what makes them encyclopedic, if not encyclopedias in a post-Enlightenment sense—is a set of shared "motifs and ambitions and techniques, all of them linked in some way with the idea of comprehensive and systematic knowledge-ordering."[20]

Reading these texts as tokens of a similar knowledge practice rather than members of a common genre permits us to see the continuities between strategies of knowledge-ordering that cut across different bibliographical categories. Such an approach is particularly useful in the context of the Mamluk book world, in which traditional literary genres came to exhibit tremendous fluidity and development, as we will see in subsequent chapters. This fluidity and instability of genre is not unique to fourteenth-century Egypt and Syria; it seems to have been a feature of much ancient, medieval, and early modern encyclopedic literature produced before the consolidation of the

eighteenth-century genre.[21] For this reason, relying on book titles and other contemporary bibliographical signposts to make sense of the field of texts produced by al-Nuwayrī and his contemporaries is not always helpful in explaining the connections between compilatory forms that emerged in different genres yet appeared to have been interrelated. This is not to say that the terms "encyclopedia" and "*mawsūʿa*" are not useful to the study of texts such as the *Ultimate Ambition*, and not just because, as H. Munro once said, "a little inaccuracy sometimes saves tons of explanation."[22] Aside from the convenience of a catch-all term, the utility of the word "encyclopedia" lies in its synthetic character. In the absence of an indigenous nomenclature, it provides a functional shorthand for referring to texts sharing encyclopedic "motifs and ambitions and techniques," whether or not they claim affiliation to a common genre.

But what are the limits of encyclopedism? Some may suggest that to use such a soft focus in the study of this phenomenon is to blur the boundaries between intellectual projects that were entirely distinct.[23] If encyclopedism is no less a feature of voluminous legal textbooks and Quran commentaries as it is of literary anthologies, biographical dictionaries, *ḥadīth* concordances, and scribal manuals, does it cease to mean anything at all? The approach I pursue in this book does not aim to elide the differences between such texts, but to help us make sense of their commonalities. From a practical perspective, this means that a work such as al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* should be read on its own terms, and also against these terms. Scholars must take the work's self-classifications and authorial statements seriously while scrutinizing their implications. In what ways did this book conform to the structural and thematic pattern of the paradigmatic adab works from which it claimed descent? How to explain its significant divergences from this paradigm in content, arrangement, and self-conception, and what was at stake for its author in situating his book within the tradition that he did? In what follows, I begin this reading by exploring some of the principal motivations for large-scale compilation in al-Nuwayrī's time.

AL-NUWAYRĪ AMONG HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Sometime in the 1310s, after over a decade of service to the imperial government, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī withdrew from his duties in order to devote the rest of his life to writing a book. Unlike many of his colleagues in the chancery, he was not an established poet or litterateur, as his career in administration had mostly been spent in financial bureaus. Nor was he well known as a scholar or teacher, despite having lived much of his adult life in a Cairene madrasa. Born on April 5th, 1279, in the Egyptian town of Akhmīm,[24] his father appears to have been a scholar[25] and a few of his relatives had held bureaucratic positions in the Mamluk administration, which would suggest that the family belonged to the learned

civilian elite.[26] Al-Nuwayrī spent his childhood in Qūṣ, a city in Upper Egypt where he studied with various teachers including Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, a future chief judge. It may have been this individual who facilitated the young man's first job in the Mamluk government, as it was common for the relatives, students, and close friends of high-ranking officials to ride their coattails into the imperial administration.[27]

At the age of twenty-three, al-Nuwayrī left Egypt to assume a position in Damascus, managing the properties of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.[28] He spent a couple of years living in Syria, which was at that time a frontier territory in the clashes between the Mamluks and the Mongols, and returned to Cairo in 1304 to oversee the sultan's properties and several other institutions endowed by his father, the late sultan Qalāwūn.[29] This important position involved a combination of financial accounting, intelligence gathering, legal arbitration, property surveying, diplomacy and negotiation, and what we might call today general management. As a high-ranking clerk, al-Nuwayrī sat at the center of a great network of officials, merchants, and private individuals connected to the affairs of al-Nāṣir's government: jurists, teachers, Quran reciters, and students in the large collegiate mosques; surgeons, bone-setters, oculists, and their patients in the various hospitals around Cairo; sugar producers, traders, and agriculturalists; Mamluk officers and their retinues; judges, provincial governors, Sufi shaykhs, and others. Managing these interests effectively on behalf of the sultan's fisc required fluency in a range of discourses. Such fluency would not have been required of every clerk, but the culture of the elite might accurately be characterized as cosmopolitan and intellectually omnivorous in its outlook.

The long reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1293–94, 1299–1309, 1310–41) represented one of the most stable and prosperous periods in Mamluk history. Al-Nāṣir was successful at consolidating the power of the sultanate at the expense of the senior Mamluk commanders—a challenge that had eluded many of his predecessors—while centralizing the state's administrative system and embarking on a major building spree. Through a mixture of talent and luck, al-Nuwayrī very nearly reached the pinnacle of the Mamluk administrative pyramid fairly early in his career. In September 1309, he left Cairo to join al-Nāṣir in the Syrian fortress of al-Karak during his second brief interregnum. When the sultan returned to Egypt at the end of February 1310 to begin his third reign, al-Nuwayrī was poised to benefit handsomely from his loyalty to the sovereign, but soon fell out of favor because of a political dust-up involving the steward of the sultan, a crafty figure named Ibn ʿUbāda.[30]

By the end of 1310, al-Nuwayrī had been dispatched to the town of Tripoli in present-day Lebanon (a significant demotion), where he served as the superintendent of army finances and was head of the chancery, before returning to Egypt a final time in November 1312 to oversee the financial revenues of two provinces in the Nile Delta. We do not know how long al-

Nuwayrī held these positions or when he retired from administration, but it may have been around 1316.[31] For the remainder of his life, he devoted himself to compiling the *Ultimate Ambition*, keeping body and soul together by working as a copyist of manuscripts. He died in Cairo on June 5, 1333.

In considering the biography sketched out above, a unifying thread is its institutional context. Al-Nuwayrī began his career working for the government, spent most of the following decade and a half overseeing institutions such as the Manṣūrī hospital in Cairo and the chancery in Tripoli, and then lived for the rest of his life in another imperial institution, the Nāṣiriyya madrasa, where he probably composed the *Ultimate Ambition*. This trajectory was not atypical for many of al-Nuwayrī's contemporaries; it is rare, in fact, to come across a compiler in the Mamluk realms who did not spend some time serving in the imperial chancery, studying in a Cairene or Damascene college, or working in a regional bureau in some capacity or another. Still, the notion that an individual whose career had been devoted to tallying taxes and calibrating weights and measures should produce a literary-historical summa during his retirement is an odd fact to contemplate. What led al-Nuwayrī to embark upon his encyclopedic project? As discussed above, it is difficult to explain any author's decision to compose one type of book and not another, particularly with a work as many-sided as the *Ultimate Ambition*. In al-Nuwayrī's case, however, we have several promising starting points from which to begin exploring his aspirations.

Scholars have historically approached the question of motivations for encyclopedic compilation in the Mamluk period from three general angles. The first, mentioned in the introduction, was connected with a nineteenth-century orientalist view of the later Islamic Middle Ages that regarded this as an age of literary and intellectual decadence, and its encyclopedic texts as tokens of unoriginality and a slavishness toward tradition. This consensus held sway well into the twentieth century: even Charles Pellat, whose 1966 study was one of the first to take stock of the tradition of Arabic-Islamic encyclopedism over an extended period, had the habit of ascribing literary trends to civilizational features and peculiarities of the Arab temperament. He argued, for example, that the Arabs were pointillistic and incapable of synthesis; the fact that they wrote encyclopedias by the hundreds was no wonder, as the crushing yoke of religiosity favored erudition over imagination.[32] For Pellat, in the final analysis, while the earliest expressions of Arabic encyclopedism during the Abbasid period were worthy of praise and admiration, later encyclopedic texts could only be read as a symptom of the decline of Arab-Islamic civilization.

In recent decades, the study of the late medieval Islamic world has experienced a profound reorientation, and most of the old commonplaces about decadence and decline have been swept away as our knowledge of this period's intellectual and social history has deepened.[33] However, one of the central foundations of that traditional historiography remains ingrained in

much contemporary scholarship: the association of encyclopedism with an instinct for cultural preservation, brought on by the specter of civilizational catastrophe. This represents the second angle used to explain the rise of the Mamluk encyclopedic movement. Rather than dismissing it out of hand along with the decadence thesis, I propose that it deserves careful interrogation.

THE AGE OF ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND THE MONGOL CONQUESTS

In February 1258, the armies of the Mongol Ilkhanids led by Hülegü, a grandson of Genghis Khan, sacked the Abbasid capital at Baghdad and brought an end to a dynasty that had reigned through periods of glory and ignominy for half a millennium. The ferocity of the attack is the stuff of legend. Hundreds of thousands were said to have been slaughtered, buildings razed to the ground, and the historic libraries of the city gutted and destroyed, making the waters of the Tigris run black with the ink of discarded books. Following its victory at Baghdad, the Mongol army marched west where, two years later, it would be defeated decisively by the Mamluks at the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt.

The rise of encyclopedic literature in Egypt and Syria during the period following the Mongol conquests has often been attributed by historians to a fear among Mamluk compilers that all knowledge would be lost as a result of the destruction of libraries.[34] The sense of terror that this catastrophe provoked has been seen as a principal factor behind the work of al-Nuwayrī and his contemporaries, who ostensibly aimed to preserve the intellectual achievements of the Islamic golden age in the form of manuals, dictionaries, commentaries, and other types of composite sources.[35]

The association of encyclopedism with a cultural anxiety over the loss of civilizational heritage is understandable, given the existence of a similar discourse in the context of early modern encyclopedism. Many humanist compilers of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries justified their labors as necessary to prevent the loss of ancient learning that Europe had suffered during the Middle Ages. Figures such as Conrad Gesner, Gabriel Naudé, and Theodore Zwinger invoked different variants of the principle of exhaustive collection attributed to the Roman encyclopedist Pliny the Elder ("there is no book so bad that some good cannot be got from it") in the course of arguing for their own projects of stockpiling knowledge to save it from oblivion.[36] This preservationist attitude was not confined to the Renaissance. Even Diderot and d'Alembert, who were acutely attuned to the diminishing worth of knowledge produced even a generation earlier than their own, defended their monumental reference work in the terms of preservation:[37]

> May the *Encyclopedia* become a sanctuary, where the knowledge of man is protected from time and from revolutions. Will we not be more than

> flattered to have laid its foundations? What an advantage would it have been for our fathers and for us, if the works of the ancient peoples, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, the Romans, etc., had been transmitted in an encyclopedic work, which had also set forth the true principles of their languages? Therefore, let us do for centuries to come what we regret that past centuries did not do for ours. We daresay that if the ancients had carried through that encyclopedia, as they carried through so many other great things, and if that manuscript alone had escaped from the famous Library of Alexandria, it would have been capable of consoling us for the loss of the others.[38]

The defense of knowledge from calamitous loss is a persistent trope of European encyclopedism, but there is little evidence that Mamluk encyclopedists were motivated by similar fears. The Mongol conquests brought about dramatic transformations in the Near East but did not seem to trigger cultural trauma in the field of book production. The famous description of Baghdad's libraries being emptied into the ink-clouded Tigris is almost certainly a topos that emerged in later historiography. Local sources and other early accounts make no mention of it. And while it remained the capital of the Abbasid Empire, Baghdad had long ceased to be the glorious cultural hub it once had been during the days of Hārūn al-Rashīd. As Michael Cooperson has shown in an examination of literary reports about Baghdad and the various tropes that crystallized within them, the city seemed to have devolved into a backwater long before the Mongols sacked it. The Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr visited Baghdad three quarters of a century before Hülegü arrived and described it as resembling nothing so much as "a vanished encampment or a passing phantom."[39]

However, the question of whether or not the Mongols posed a genuine threat to the intellectual heritage of Islam is less relevant to the cultural preservationist argument than the matter of whether the authors of Arabic encyclopedic texts believed that such a threat existed. Even if the Ilkhanid forces did not destroy Baghdad's storied libraries, what is salient here is the affective consequence of the event: the emotional impact that the invasions had on the motivations of compilers.

For his part, al-Nuwayrī does not evince any such anxiety in discussing the reasons behind his life's work. This was not for a lack of knowledge about the Mongols. In the fifth book of the *Ultimate Ambition,* he devotes a 120-page discussion to the subject of the Chingissid state and the incursions of its successors into Islamic lands.[40] Although the sack of Baghdad had occurred twenty years before al-Nuwayrī's birth, the Ilkhanids launched five offensives into Syria during al-Nuwayrī's lifetime.[41] He discusses in detail the invasion of Syria and short-lived capture of Damascus by Ghazan in 1299–1300 and provides the text of the edict that Ghazan issued, reassuring the people of Syria that they had nothing to fear from their new sovereign.[42] Unable to hold

the territory because of inadequate pasturelands, the Mongols withdrew and returned in 1303, when they were defeated by the Mamluks at the Battle of Marj al-Ṣuffar. Al-Nuwayrī was himself a participant in the battle and describes it vividly:[43]

> On the night before Saturday the 2nd of Ramaḍān (April 20, 1303 CE), the military police made the rounds of the troops and informed them that the enemy had drawn near. They told everyone to remain in a state of preparedness throughout the night, and when the enemy attacked they should mount their horses and ride to the meeting point at the village of Majja near Khirbat al-Luṣūṣ. We turned in, and each one of us—commander and subordinate alike—spent the night in his armor, clutching the reins of his horse.
>
> I was in the company of my friend, the amir ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Mughulṭāy, one of the officers of the military band in Damascus. The reins of our horses remained in our hands until dawn, when we prayed and mounted our steeds. The troops stood in formation until the sun rose that Saturday, and then God sent a strong rain for about two hours, after which the sun reappeared. We remained on our horses until noon and then the Mongols arrived, like a "cloak of darkest night," and the sultan arrived with the army from Egypt within the hour.[44]
>
> The blessed battle took place on Saturday the 2nd of Ramaḍān, 702 AH (April 20, 1303 CE), and the defeat of the Mongols was complete by Sunday afternoon. When the sultan al-Nāṣir arrived at Marj al-Ṣuffar, near Shaqḥab, he arranged his army in the center of the battle order, with the Caliph Abū al-Rabīʿ Sulaymān (al-Mustakfī I) behind him. In the service of the sultan was his vice-regent the amir Sayf al-Dīn Sallār and the Master of the Household, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnikīr (and several other commanders), along with the Royal Mamluks.

Al-Nuwayrī goes on to describe the battle in detail, listing the names of the commanders leading the various wings of the army and the composition of the force. After the Mongol defeat at Marj al-Ṣuffar, Ghazan would not launch another major invasion into Mamluk territory, but the two polities remained at war.[45] Later in his career, while stationed in Syria, al-Nuwayrī was instrumental in persuading several local governors not to join a Mongol-sponsored insurrection against the imperial government in Cairo. While the military threat existed for most of his life, it did not prompt any detectable concern about the loss of Muslim heritage, texts, or accumulated knowledge. The Renaissance trope of saving civilization from oblivion was not pertinent to al-Nuwayrī's motivations and far from the concerns of other Mamluk encyclopedists like al-Qalqashandī, who wrote his great scribal compendium *Dawn for the Night-Blind: On the Craft of Chancery Writing* (*Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā*) over half a century after the dissolution of the Ilkhanate.

This is not to say that the conquests had no effect on the Mamluk realms.

The very existence of the Mamluk sultanate, as Reuven Amitai has argued, was partly an artifact of the Mongol campaigns in the Russian steppe during the 1220s and 1230s, which transformed the slave trade in Qipchak Turks and facilitated the rise of the Baḥriyya regiment in Ayyūbid Egypt.[46] In the sphere of intellectual activities, as I discuss in chapter 3, the relevance of the conquests to al-Nuwayrī's world was similarly rooted in demographic changes brought about by new patterns of trade and migration. Over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Egypt and Syria emerged as the intellectual and cultural centers of the Arabic-Islamic world.[47] Scholars and poets emigrated from the eastern territories where bureaucratic and scholarly institutions had been thrown into upheaval by the invasions, and many of them found a new home in the colleges and libraries of the Ayyubid and Mamluk realms.[48]

Therefore, to the extent that the Mongol conquests had an impact on the "Age of Encyclopedias," it was sociological, not psychological. The legacy of the conquests included a Eurasian continent more densely interconnected than ever before and a transformation of the urban centers of the Mamluk Empire. As I argue in chapter 3, this environment did not only facilitate the work of a compiler but also engendered it, insofar as the growing numbers of books and learned people circulating within the network of scholarly institutions could not but convey a sense of the expanding boundaries of knowledge. These conditions also made it possible to envision a solution to the problem of too much information, which took the form of the capacious compilatory texts that began to appear in such profusion. The production of such works was not aimed at preventing the loss of knowledge and preserving it from civilizational catastrophe, as much traditional historiography has previously supposed, but was more likely a response to the feeling of an overcrowding of authoritative sources, a feeling made especially palpable in the school cities of Cairo and Damascus.

SCRIBAL CULTURE AND PRACTICE

Al-Nuwayrī's biography captures in miniature many of the principal models and motivations for encyclopedic compilation around the turn of the fourteenth century. It speaks to the prestige associated with literary erudition among his contemporaries as well as the professionalizing role that this erudition played in the scribal administration and the world of educational institutions. Al-Nuwayrī was, in many ways, a man of his time: a figure who found himself implicated in the processes of centralization—political-territorial, financial-administrative, scholarly-educational, and textual—that shaped his period's intellectual production.[49] And the *Ultimate Ambition* was, like its author, something of an institutional product: a work that came to fruition in the context of colleges, imperial chanceries, and libraries.

This brings us to the third framework used to explain the phenomenon of

encyclopedism, which has seen in it a reflection of Mamluk scribal culture and practice. Here, we are on firmer ground than the previous two approaches. The scribal institutions and the educational formation they cultivated were central to the cultural life of the Mamluk civilian elite, and represent one of the essential contexts within which the efflorescence of encyclopedism must be understood. While several parallels between the worlds of Abbasid and Mamluk officialdom might be noted, it is the differences that are most salient to an understanding of what characterized the literary landscape of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. As recent scholarship has shown, the nexus of intellectual exchange during this period was no longer the sovereign's court, where it had been centered in earlier Islamic polities. Under the Mamluks, other milieus such as educational institutions and the chancery would come to play a fundamental role in the transmission of knowledge and the circulation of the intelligentsia.[50] Administration served as a key meeting point for individuals with a wide range of specialties, interests, and abilities.

The copious administrative literature of the period provides a window onto the culture of the Mamluk secretarial and scholarly classes, who were responsible for the vast bulk of the period's encyclopedic production. In one of the longest chapters of the *Ultimate Ambition*—occupying approximately 850 pages—al-Nuwayrī lays out a kind of professional manual for the scribe, comprising a multitude of subjects relevant to his day-to-day dealings: samples of praiseworthy epistles, styles of greeting and salutation, guidelines for the practices of good bookkeeping and proper penmanship, and boiler-plate language for every manner of legal transaction, from royal letters of investiture to common divorces. In addition to the mass of administrative minutiae, al-Nuwayrī speaks more generally about the education of the secretary and his cultivation of eloquence, a process that required the study of various materials—a kind of scribal curriculum.

At the head of this curriculum, naturally, was the Quran, which the secretary had to memorize and make a part of his consciousness, such that appropriate quotations would leap to his mind spontaneously in the course of penning an epistle. Following the Quran, the secretary should develop a mastery of ḥadīth, Arabic grammar, rhetoric, classical Arabic poetry, belletristic prose, proverbs, constitutional and administrative law, and political history. Just when one thinks the curriculum is complete, al-Nuwayrī casually reminds his reader that, in addition to these basics, the secretary must also be familiar with different kinds of animals, birds, plants, trees, geographic locales, etc., as he would be called upon to test this multifaceted knowledge in the service of his craft:

> As for letters that include descriptions of weapons and implements of war, horses, birds of prey, types of sport, and things of that nature, the scribe is given free rein to do what he can with his own eloquence . . . With regard to horses and birds of prey, and everything related to them from cheetahs

> and [other] hunting animals, the knowledge of their qualities and the tokens of their skill is essential to the scribe . . . And as for letters meant to exercise the mind and test one's talents—such as boasting jousts between fruits and blossoms, and descriptions of aromatic plants, rivers, streams, canals, creeks, seas, ships, and things of that nature . . . we will present some of them [in a later volume].[51]

The *Ultimate Ambition*'s extensive treatment of the scribal arts, therefore, seems to have served two functions. On the one hand, it presented a wealth of technical and administrative information pertaining specifically to chancery affairs. On the other hand, the chapter also gestured towards the rest of the book and proposed that its copious contents were not just relevant, but essential to the formation of the model clerk. It brings to mind the previously mentioned qualifications for entering the Sasanian scribal administration, as described by Ibn Qutayba. Unlike the *Secretary's Art* however, the *Ultimate Ambition* both described the expectations of the scribe and provided the content of his education: it styled itself as an encyclopedic guide for an encyclopedic education.

This treatment of clerkly erudition prompts several questions. First, we would be justified in wondering just how idealized a picture it was. In other words, was it actually crucial for a scribe to know who the caliph al-Maʾmūn's favorite singing slave-girl was? Did he truly need to be well versed in the nesting habits of flamingoes, or the rituals of moon-worshipping cults? Was he really expected to know which aromatic blossoms were capable of being distilled (roses, white willows, and water lilies), and which ones were not (violets, jasmine, myrtle, saffron, and mint)? Did one, in other words, have to be a walking encyclopedia, just to wield the scribe's pen? As I discuss in chapter 4, one can assume a certain amount of exaggeration in the descriptions of scribal education that one finds in the compendia of al-Nuwayrī , al-ʿUmarī, and al-Qalqashandī, who represent a triumvirate of sorts in Mamluk encyclopedic literature, frequently invoked in the same breath by historians. The imperial administration was a complex institution in which secretaries played different roles and the training of a chancery secretary differed from that of his colleagues in the financial bureaus, as the *Ultimate Ambition* itself makes clear. However, the portrait that al-Nuwayrī paints of the perfect scribe, for all its embellishment, makes clear the significance of encyclopedic erudition as an ideal to the members of this professional class.

A final question to consider here concerns the extent to which the salience of this encyclopedic ideal to individuals like al-Nuwayrī, al-ʿUmarī, and al-Qalqashandī can be generalized as a framework to explain encyclopedism as a broad-based phenomenon beyond the boundaries of their professional class. Here, some interpretive caution is warranted. On the one hand, it is significant that all three members of this encyclopedic triumvirate happened to be high-ranking secretaries whose compendia enshrined materials valuable to the

scribal elite. On the other other hand, the fact that these three works have been regarded by most scholars as paradigmatic of Mamluk encyclopedism means that there is a risk of circular argumentation in depending upon them to explain the sources of a phenomenon that they, in many ways, have been used to constitute.

Resisting this circularity requires pointing out, in the first instance, that the encyclopedic interests of the triumvirate's authors did not only have purchase within the chancery but across a wider landscape of intellectual production. Here, I draw upon the insights of Thomas Bauer, who has argued that a signature of Mamluk society was the integration of literary culture—which had, under the Abbasids, been mainly the preserve of the scribes (*kuttāb*)—with the traditional religious sciences pursued by the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*). Rather than the scribes representing a class distinct from the scholars, the administration came to be populated by individuals who had studied in madrasas and received an education in the religious sciences in addition to an orientation to scribal protocols and procedures. "The result," says Bauer, "was a rather homogeneous group of ulama who became the bearers of Islamic religious as well as of secular culture," a process he refers to as the "ulamaization of *adab*" alongside the "*adab*ization of the ulama."[52] For our purposes, the blending of these two ethics begins to explain the appeal of encyclopedic compilation to individuals who straddled the worlds of administration and education, as we will see in later chapters.

Even with this in mind, however, it is important to recognize that reading the works of al-Nuwayrī, al-ʿUmarī, and al-Qalqashandī together as an encyclopedic triumvirate, as useful and productive as that grouping proves to be, can cause distortions in our understanding of their individual motivations. While the secretarial context may be the most sensible vantage point for surveying the conceptual horizons of these three authors, it is also clear that they were influenced by other concerns as well. I conclude this chapter by considering al-Nuwayrī's personal objectives for composing the *Ultimate Ambition* insofar as they may be gauged from his testimonies within the work. Far from confirming a straightforward correspondence between the demands of a scribal career and the interests of an encyclopedist, these confidences suggest that other aspirations were at the heart of his decision to forego a career as a powerful servant of the imperial government and retire to a life of books.

THE DESERTS OF ADAB

Al-Nuwayrī begins the *Ultimate Ambition* with a preface that offers a glimpse into his motivations for embarking upon his encyclopedic project. While there are many relevant statements scattered throughout the work—which has five prefaces, one for each of its five books—the first is the most revealing. In the manner of many medieval Arabic compilatory texts, it contains a survey of

contents and a discussion of the circumstances that led al-Nuwayrī to compose it:

> Among the worthiest things to adorn the pages of books and to be uttered by the tongues of pens from the mouths of inkstands is the art of *adab*.[53] The sharp-witted produce it and the highborn claim descent from it. The scribe makes it the means by which he achieves his ends and the path that never leads him astray. When he encamps in its valley his deserts become cultivated, and when he visits its watering places he finds them to be sweet. He descends into its courtyard and finds it ample and spacious, and ponders its quandaries only to have their explanations made clear.[54]
>
> I was one of those who journeyed through the deserts of *adab*, yet refrained from joining the gatherings of its practitioners. Secretaryship was the branch in whose shade I reposed, and the field in which I mastered old and new principles . . . Then I put secretaryship behind me and decided to leave it privately, if not publicly. I asked God to allow me to dispense with it and implored Him for that which He is more able to provide. I sought out the craft of the literary arts and I became devoted to it, enlisting in the path of its masters. But I saw that my objective would not be achieved by gleaning knowledge from the mouths of the cultivated, nor would my access to it become clear so long as I applied my efforts foolishly.
>
> So I mounted the stallion of reading and galloped in the field of consultation. When the steed became obedient to me and its water sources became clear, I chose to abstract from my reading a book that would keep me company, that I could consult, and that I would rely upon when faced with certain tasks. I called upon God most High, and produced a work composed of five Books, arranged harmoniously and clearly, with each Book divided into five Sections.[55]

In contrast to the preface of al-Qalqashandī's *Dawn for the Night-Blind,* al-Nuwayrī's testimony gives the impression that he wrote the *Ultimate Ambition* not for an audience of fellow scribes, but primarily for himself. He credits the world of secretaryship as an inspiration insofar as it drove him to reject its ledgers and account-books to pursue a different calling: the study of adab. The absence of a dedication to a patron—not even a recognition of the Mamluk sultan—heightens the solitary mood of the preface. In its original design, the work is portrayed as a personal reference, a tool for self-edification, a storehouse for the author's treasured clippings, excerpts, and paraphrases.

This candid testimony help us to grasp one of the idiosyncratic dimensions of the *Ultimate Ambition*, which sets it apart from the compendia to which it is often compared. Consider for a moment the striking incongruity of this work in the life of a man who never wrote another book: no anthologies of poetry, epistles, or epigrams; no commentaries on canonical works; no scribal

treatises or manuals; in short, no apparent engagement in the quintessential scholarly activities of his day. For al-Nuwayrī, secretaryship and adab represented two related but separate domains. While the scribe could not do without a knowledge of adab, success in the scribal domain did not necessarily entail a mastery of all of its branches. One could rise in the ranks as an elite administrator without being a walking encyclopedia in the tradition of Ibn Qutayba and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. And as al-Nuwayrī tells his readers, this is precisely what he had done in his own career—journeying across the vast landscape of adab but never stopping to join "the gatherings of its practioners." This is what he sought to remedy during his retirement.

Having decided to launch this project of self-edification, it is significant that both its goal and the means to achieve it were conceived in terms of written rather than oral mediums. Al-Nuwayrī recognized that he could not simply acquire a literary education by attending salons to hear poets declaiming panegyrics before their patrons. The adab collections of the ninth and tenth centuries were now primary sources, along with hundreds of other canonical texts. Navigating this literary heritage could only be done through reading and consultation, and the end product of this reading and consultation was, unsurprisingly, yet another book. Al-Nuwayrī's attitude towards his sources is summed up in the second half of the preface, which follows the table of contents (see appendix A):

> When this book's chapters were completed, and its whole and parts were united, I named it *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*. Through it, I achieved my goal and purpose, securing the essential and banishing the incidental, adorning it with the necklace of my own sayings, and the pearls of my predecessors. My own words in it are like the night-cloud leading the rain-clouds, or the patrol followed by the squadron. They are only a summary of its books, and eyebrows over its eyes.
>
> I only included that which would please the senses, and had I known of any error in it, I would have clenched my fingers and turned away. But I have followed the traces of those excellent ones before me, and pursued their way, and connected my rope to theirs. So if there should be any complaint, the dishonor is upon them and not me. I have learned that he who composes a book becomes a target, deafening some ears even as he pleases others.[56]

The work's title bears some important rhetorical differences from earlier classical adab collections. As Stephanie Thomas has observed, works like Ibn Qutayba's *Quintessential Reports* and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *Unique Necklace* placed an emphasis on "the superlative quality of the contents, their preciousness, their extreme value . . . and the rarity and novelty of their being collected in a single (though not single-volume) work." They may be contrasted with the orientation of a later work, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *Apt Quotables of the Literati and Conversations of Poets and Eloquent Men*

(*Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ wa-muḥāwarāt al-shuʿarāʾ wa-l-bulaghāʾ*), which adopted a more pragmatic self-presentation.[57]

The first half of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s rhyming title recalls the self-glorifying strains of Ibn Qutayba and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's books, but its claim of exquisiteness and uniqueness was a placeholder meant to rhyme with the descriptive second half of the title ("*in the Arts of Erudition*"). Here the emphasis is not on the value or function of the work's contents, but on the unambiguous identification of the genre it claimed to belong to (adab) and its multidimensional character.[58] As we will see in chapter 2, the concept of adab put forward in the *Ultimate Ambition* was as idiosyncratic as its compiler's decision to write this book. It transgresses the boundaries of adab's earlier acceptations and becomes maximally expansive, encompassing topics and forms of discourse once deemed beyond its purview.

Who were the "masters" of this field whom al-Nuwayrī hoped to emulate? Beyond the distant exemplars of the tradition, one suspects that he had some of the famous litterateurs of his own age in mind, figures who led the imperial chanceries in Cairo and Damascus. One likely role model would have been Maḥmūd ibn Sulaymān ibn Fahd al-Ḥalabī (d. 725/1325), whose book *The Proper Means to Arrive at the Craft of Letter Writing* (*Ḥusn al-tawassul ilā ṣināʿat al-tarassul*) al-Nuwayrī incorporated into his chapter on secretaryship. Other possibilities include the Ibn Faḍl Allāh brothers—Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 717/1317) and Muḥyī al-Dīn (d. 738/1337)—the latter of whom was the father of the famous encyclopedist. The Banū Faḍl Allāh was a cultivated scribal family, a fixture of Mamluk politics during the fourteenth century and well known for their patronage of poets and litterateurs.[59] Among the beneficiaries of their largesse was Ibn Nubāta al-Miṣrī (d. 768/1366), one of the greatest poets of the Mamluk period and a contemporary of al-Nuwayrī. While he is not quoted in the *Ultimate Ambition* and may not have emerged as a celebrity poet by the time al-Nuwayrī began writing, the two men circulated in the same networks of chancery officials and scholars interested in adab.

Comparing al-Nuwayrī and Ibn Nubāta's professional trajectories helps us to appreciate the kind of literary sensibility to which al-Nuwayrī aspired. Thomas Bauer has shown how Ibn Nubāta prepared for his emergence on the public stage at the age of thirty by composing an anthology that demonstrated his prowess as an expert on the language, while also serving as "a manifesto for the importance of the professional *adīb* . . . [who] had his place in the madrasah as a scholar in the field of the propaedeutic linguistic disciplines; in the chancellery as specialist in [epistolography], and in a way also in everybody's home as an advisor in literary matters."[60] The anthology was entitled *Where Wisdom Appears and Amusement Is Gathered* (*Maṭlaʿ al-fawāʾid wa-majmaʿ al-farāʾid*) and contained Prophetic traditions, poetry from across the centuries, literary epistles, and a wide range of selections meant to style the litterateur "as a bearer of knowledge indispensable for religious studies, as an interpreter of the secular tradition of Arabic lore and

literature, as *maître de plaisir*, as author of refined poetry and prose, and as a [clerk] in the service of the state."[61] Ibn Nubāta chose to unveil his anthology in Syria, which was at that time the home of the most famous men of letters in the empire.[62]

At the equivalent stage in his own life, al-Nuwayrī was still working in administration and had himself recently returned from Syria, where he spent some of the most fruitful and rewarding years of his career.[63] Like Ibn Nubāta, he was in thrall to the sophistication of the Syrian *udabāʾ*, but unlike the great poet, al-Nuwayrī was not a literary prodigy. By his own admission, he had spent most of his life as a kind of dabbler, a person who appreciated adab but had devoted himself instead to the craft of financial secretaryship. While Ibn Nubāta could stage his debut at age thirty, al-Nuwayrī's own literary education was only just beginning.

In this respect, he bore a greater resemblance to someone like Ibn Nubāta's son, whom Bauer describes as "a mediocre *adīb,* who earned his living as a copyist," and did not live up to the expectations of his father. Antonella Ghersetti has similarly described al-Nuwayrī's contemporary and fellow encyclopedist, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ, as "half an *adīb*," a man esteemed for his knowledge of books and literary taste but lacking the critical talent for composing poetry.[64] As he launched into his encyclopedic project, al-Nuwayrī belonged to this large subset of the civilian elite for whom scholarly and literary pursuits were "more an avocation than a career."[65] Compilation represented a way for them to participate in an economy of prestige that encompassed many forms, including epistle-writing, laudatory blurbs, epigrams, and of course the traditional genres of poetry. Of all these forms, encyclopedic compilation demonstrated the fullest breadth of an individual's interests and competencies, indicating the extent of his reading and taste like few other types of literary activity could.

CONCLUSION

The fact of al-Nuwayrī's status as a novice in adab is what makes his work idiosyncratic in certain regards and representative in others. It sheds light on the ways that individuals like him—amateur adībs compared to giants like Ibn Nubāta, but accomplished compilers, anthologists, and historians in their own right—involved themselves in the intellectual life of their day. Alongside the attraction of adab as a source of edification and entertainment for the aspiring litterateur, this chapter has proposed that the motivations for encyclopedic activity should be sought in the worlds of scholarship and administration, which I take up in chapters 3 and 4. That argument is offered in place of two older frameworks examined here, which interpreted the rise of encyclopedism during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries as a symptom of cultural decline, or an anxiety among compilers about the threat posed to human knowledge by foreign conquests. A third approach, which stresses the salience

of scribal culture and practice to the professional background and educational training of large-scale compilers, while correct in its outlines, must be coupled with a focus on the motivations of individual figures if we are to make sense of the full range of this intellectual movement.

It should also be apparent by now why the "encyclopedism vs. encyclopedia" distinction elaborated earlier in this discussion will be important for the explorations that follow. Al-Nuwayrī situated the *Ultimate Ambition* unequivocally within the tradition of adab but many of the works that inspired him—some of which were no less encyclopedic in their own ambition, thematic range, and structuring mechanisms than his—claimed to belong to other genres altogether, either adjacent to his or farther afield. Tracing the continuities between his work and the compositional models that informed it helps us account for the proliferation of encyclopedic forms in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. I turn to this topic in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

STRUCTURES OF KNOWLEDGE

PERCEIVING THE SHAPE OF A large object sometimes requires looking at it from a distance, where its full dimensions may come into view. A city park appears differently from the treetops than it does at street level and different still from a bird's-eye view, where features indiscernible at close range become visible. Similarly, the shape of a large text may usefully be surveyed from a distance at which qualities inaccessible to the closest reading—such as its internal configuration, thematic sweep, and relation to a wider field of texts—may become more apparent.

Encyclopedic works lend themselves to panoramic study. It is not simply the immensity of a book such as al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* that invites a distant perspective, but also the intricate arrangement of its contents. A bird's-eye view of a city park with no significant topographical features would only confirm the impression gained about the territory as seen from the ground. A park with walkways and bridges insinuated amongst botanical gardens, fishponds, wildlife sanctuaries, and lookout points is a space whose composition is best grasped with the use of a good map. In this chapter, I seek to present such a map of the *Ultimate Ambition*. In examining the work's arrangement, navigational aids, and internal logic, it emerges that al-Nuwayrī was a fastidious compiler with a precise vision of how the parts of his work related to each other, and, by extension, how human knowledge itself could be ordered within a single book. Uniting literary, scientific, bureaucratic, religious, and historical materials, the *Ultimate Ambition* put forward an experimental synthesis unusual in the field of classical Arabic adab, while encompassing the core of that literary tradition and seeking to represent it. Its contents reflect the encyclopedic tastes and multicompetence of the Mamluk civilian elite, and shed light on the development of adab and historiography as generically promiscuous yet epistmologically distinctive discursive forms.

Much encyclopedic literature in the Mamluk period was self-consciously

caught up in the problem of structure. How to organize a body of knowledge in a systematic way? What effects do disciplinary and generic structures have on the materials they curate? Understanding these structures means being able to see them as contingent rather than inevitable. As Jorge Luis Borges famously remarked of a certain fictional Chinese encyclopedia: "[There] is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and speculative."[1] Encyclopedic taxonomies encode these arbitrarities in revealing ways, making apparent the codes and hierarchies that "tame the wild profusion of existing things."[2] I begin this chapter by considering the shape of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s taxonomic apparatus, how it was informed by available textual models in the adab tradition, and the ways in which it was *sui generis*. Exploring these aspects of the text offers us some insight into the techniques with which encyclopedic works were produced in the Mamluk period. Al-Nuwayrī's specific combination of materials may have been an anomaly within the classical adab tradition but his eclecticism and formal experimentation were typical of contemporary compilers. Many encyclopedic works emerged out of the processes of abridgment, expansion, and concatenation used in the composition of the *Ultimate Ambition*. As I propose below, what appears in the aggregate as an encyclopedic movement might be understood as the result of similar compilatory practices being adopted within distinct genres, from literary anthologies to lexicons to universal chronicles.

Previous readings of al-Nuwayrī's book, like those of many other medieval encyclopedic works, have tended to mine its contents for specific information. I offer a different approach here. By examining the *Ultimate Ambition*'s parts in light of the whole, we are afforded a view of it as not simply a collection of disparate shards of knowledge but as a coherent intellectual project. This is not to suggest that distant reading offers the most valuable perspective on an encyclopedic text, but that the fine-grained analysis of the work's sources, arguments, and modes of discourse presented in subsequent chapters depends upon an understanding of the framework that envelops them.

THE SHAPE OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

From the perspective of its earliest readers, the most imposing feature of the *Ultimate Ambition* may have been its size. Among medieval adab compilations, there are few works anywhere near as large. By comparison, Ibn Qutayba's *Quintessential Reports* is about one tenth as long, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *Unique Necklace* perhaps a fifth, with most other collections falling somewhere in between. Viewed alongside these texts, the *Ultimate Ambition*'s proportions are something of a puzzle. There is no discernible historical trend among adab works towards increasing bulk over time; al-Ibshīhī's compendium, *The Exquisite Elements from Every Art Considered Elegant* (*al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*), was composed several decades after the

Ultimate Ambition and is shorter than the ninth-century *Quintessential Reports,* and many of the most popular adab works of the Mamluk period were slim anthologies.[3]

From a bird's-eye view, the *Ultimate Ambition* appears as a vast landscape crisscrossed by borders demarcating it into territories of different shapes and sizes. The main division of the work is into five principal books (*funūn*, lit. "branches" or "arts"), on the subjects of heaven and earth; the human being; the animal world; the plant world; and a universal history. Each book is in turn divided into five sections (*aqsām*) containing several chapters (*abwāb*), ranging from two to fourteen. Beyond this third level of classification, there are finer subdivisions scattered throughout the text but these are not usually numbered systematically, nor are they listed in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s table of contents, which occupies several folios in the first few pages of the work.[4] This hierarchy of books, sections, and chapters provides the architecture for a text that is nine thousand pages long and contains over 2.3 million words (see table 2.1).[5]

A second unusual feature of the *Ultimate Ambition* is its arrangement, which would likely have struck a medieval reader well versed in the study of adab as being uncommonly hierarchical. The contents are laid out in a stratified fashion, with certain subjects subordinated to others. The horse is presented in the first chapter of the third section on livestock, which appears in the third book, on animals.[6] The subchapter on the bitter orange falls in the first chapter on fruits with an inedible peel, part of the second section on trees, in the fourth book on plants. A literary debate between a candelabrum and a lamp composed by al-Nuwayrī's contemporary, Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Yamānī (d. 743/1342), appears as the third sub-subchapter of the tenth subchapter on candles, candelabra, and lamps, part of the fourth chapter on fire, in the second section on meteorological phenomena, in the first book on heaven and earth.[7] That an encyclopedic text should organize its contents according to hierarchies of various sorts may seem natural to modern readers. As I argue below, however, al-Nuwayrī's zeal for taxonomy represents something of an aberration in the literary tradition within which he situated his text.

Table 2.1 describes the work's structural paradigm but gives no hint of the branching networks of fourth- and fifth-order subchapters that further divide the book's contents. The chapter on the horse mentioned above, for example, consists of twenty-three subchapters listed beneath the chapter heading. Some of these subchapters are no longer than a single manuscript page, containing a few Prophetic traditions on the subject of horses. Others are longer and provide a diverse sampling of the vast equestrian literature and lore inherited from the pre-Islamic world.

TABLE 2.1. THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*'S THREE-TIERED HIERARCHY

BOOK	SECTION	CHAPTER

1.1: Heavens, Earth	*5 chapters*
1.2: Meteorological phenomena	*4 chapters*
1.3: Units of time, holidays, feasts	*4 chapters*
1.4: Physical geography	*7 chapters*
1.5: Human geography	*5 chapters*
2.1: Morphology, genealogy, love poetry	*4 chapters*
2.2: Pre-Islamic proverbs, practices, stories	*5 chapters*
2.3: Praise, invective, jests, wine, music, etc.	*7 chapters*
2.4: Congratulations, elegies, asceticism, etc.	*4 chapters*
2.5: Rulers, advisors, armies, scribes	*14 chapters*
3.1: Carnivores	*3 chapters*
3.2: Other wild beasts	*3 chapters*
3.3: Livestock	*3 chapters*
3.4: Venomous creatures	*2 chapters*
3.5: Birds, fish, insects, hunting implements	*8 chapters*
4.1: Plant origin, soil, foodstuffs, vegetables	*3 chapters*
4.2: Trees and fruit	*3 chapters*
4.3: Aromatic flowers	*2 chapters*
4.4: Gardens, flowers, resins, mannas	*4 chapters*
4.5: Perfumery, distillates, sexual medicines	*11 chapters*
5.1: Adam and Eve to the People of the Ditch	*8 chapters*
5.2: Prophetic history from Abraham to Shuʿayb	*7 chapters*
5.3: Prophetic history from Moses to Jesus	*10 chapters*
5.4: Kings of Ancient China, Persia, Arabia, etc.	*5 chapters*
5.5: Islamic history	*12 chapters*

The intricacy of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s arrangement could not have been the result of a haphazard compositional method, nor was it an architectural plan formulated at the outset of the work only to be abandoned in practice; the work's divisions mirror the structure presented in its table of contents. This is in contrast to a text such as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *Unique Necklace,* whose author described the structure of the work in his preface but took license in modifying the plan as he went along.[8] Similarly, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* is ostensibly based upon a very detailed table of contents but pursues a different scheme altogether across its thirty-seven volumes. As Trevor Murphy observes, "what you actually encounter when you read the body of the book sequentially is detail juxtaposed with detail, parataxis, particularity, multiplicity, and self-contradiction."[9] In the *Ultimate Ambition*, thematic entropy is kept in check by the constraints of the work's architecture, a system that some have found overly rigid, even if logically composed.[10]

TABLE 2.2. DIVISIONS OF *ULTIMATE AMBITION* §3.3.1 (ON THE HORSE)

§	SUBCHAPTER TITLE
3.3.1.1	On the creation of the horse and who first broke it and rode it
3.3.1.2	On the excellence and blessedness of the horse and the merit of taking care of it

3.3.3 Explanation of obscure words in two ḥadīths on horses
3.3.4 On the virtue of loaning your stallion to someone so that it can cover that person's mare
3.3.5 On the supplications of horses for their masters
3.3.6 On what has been said about how the devil will not corrupt anyone who has a thoroughbred in his house, nor will he enter a house with a thoroughbred in it
3.3.7 On encouraging horse procreation and forbidding the castration of horses and permitting it, and forbidding the shearing of its mane and forelocks
3.3.8 On raising horseflesh, by way of authorization and disapproval
3.3.9 On the prohibition of selling horse semen
3.3.10 On what has been said about honoring horses and prohibiting their debasement
3.3.11 On tethering your horse and on their colors and signs [i.e., blazes, stockings, and other markings]
3.3.12 On the preference of mares over stallions and vice versa
3.3.13 On what has been said about bad omens associated with horses, and what is inauspicious with respect to the whiteness of their stockings
3.3.14 On what has been said about racing horses and what is permitted and what is forbidden with respect to it, the conditions of training for races, and the names of the horses on the racecourse
3.3.15 On the conditions of training
3.3.16 On what the owner of a horse gets from the shares of plunder and the differences between thoroughbreds, mixed breeds, and draft horses with respect to this issue
3.3.17 On the non-applicability of the almsgiving obligation to horses
3.3.18 On how the Bedouin Arabs described the horse
3.3.19 On what has been said about its nature, behaviors, praiseworthy attributes, good qualities, and the signs that point to the excellence and nobility of a horse
3.3.20 On the names of the Prophet's horses
3.3.21 On the names of some of the celebrated horses among the Arabs
3.3.22 On riddles about horses in prose and poetry
3.3.23 Some choice selections accusing the horse of emaciation and weakness

CROSS-REFERENCES AND THEMATIC MODULARITY

The avoidance of digression, allusion, and periphrasis—qualities characteristic of the discursive mode of adab in its classical formulation—brings us to another structural element of relevance: the thematic consistency of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s chapters. Unlike many other premodern encyclopedic works, al-Nuwayrī's text is highly modular: it stays on topic and eschews excursuses, unlike the *Natural History*, for instance, which often leads its readers down meandering paths away from the main thematic thoroughfares. Pliny's chapter on the elephant, for example, is interrupted by a lengthy discussion of the serpent and the ancient hatred between the two animals.[11]

By contrast, in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s chapter on the elephant, al-Nuwayrī deliberately contains the drift of ideas towards peripheral subjects. After discussing the animal's genetic lineage, mating habits, provenance, and the length of its tusks, he briefly mentions a historical example of the use of elephants in military conquests—Maḥmūd of Ghazna's famous sieges—but then redirects the narrative back to the subject at hand, promising his reader to return to Maḥmūd's war elephants in his discussion of the Ghaznavid state in

book 5.[12]

This practice of cross-referencing, which is widespread in the *Ultimate Ambition*, is unusual in adab compilations and seems to have been implemented by al-Nuwayrī as a counterweight to the dissociating effects of his book's hierarchical arrangement. When in the course of treating a particular subject al-Nuwayrī arrives at a point where the discussion threatens to head off on a tangent, he frequently asks the reader to pick up the thread in a different chapter, thereby arresting the easy flow of an anecdote for the sake of thematic unity. A cross-reference might be as vague as an allusion to a discussion earlier in the same section, or as specific as a precise citation to a different part of the work, including its chapter and volume numbers. In his treatment of the literary descriptions of al-Andalus, al-Nuwayrī begins by quoting an excerpt from an epistle by the famous Cordoban jurist and litterateur Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). He follows the excerpt with a list of books worth consulting on the topic of al-Andalus, such as Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī's (d. 543/1147) *Treasury of the Merits of the People of the Peninsula* (*al-Dhakhīra fī maḥāsin ahl al-Jazīra*) and al-Fatḥ Ibn Khāqān's (d. ca. 529/1134) *The Golden Necklaces* (*Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*), and concludes the chapter with the following statement:

> We will discuss, God willing, the state of al-Andalus, its settlement, and its kings when we take up the subject of its conquest, and that is in the fifth chapter of the first section of the fifth book on history, which deals with the stories of the Umayyad state . . . during the caliphate of al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, during the year 92 of the *hijra*.[13]

Other examples of cross-references include al-Nuwayrī's reminder to his readers of the zoological treatment of the musk deer (§3.2.3) in his botanical discussion of musk and its varieties (§4.5.1), and his mention of the sections on fruits, flowers, and gardens (§4.2–§4.4) in a subchapter on love and passion (§2.1.3.6), where he alludes to the importance of botanical imagery in classical poetry. A particularly targeted cross-reference is found in al-Nuwayrī's genealogical discussion of the sons of Nizār (grandson of ʿAdnān, ancestor of the Northern Arabs, §2.1.4.3), which points to a specific proverb about these legendary figures falling "under the letter *hamza,* in the first chapter of the second section of this book, in the beginning of the third volume of our work."[14] This level of specificity in the cross-reference ensures that locating the proverb in question is a matter of a few page flips and a scan through some rubricated keywords, rather than an afternoon's slog through hundreds of pages' worth of miscellaneous information.[15] Most of the cross-references appear in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s first four books and direct the reader to chapters in the fifth book on history, but this last book is also replete with cross-references that help the reader navigate its many volumes. In this manner historical and literary materials are separated, but the links between chapters help to preserve the conceit that all of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s

contents fall under the realm of adab.

Like the prefatory remarks discussed in chapter 1, the *Ultimate Ambition*'s cross-references offer us a glimpse into the personality of its author, who remains mostly hidden amongst his sources, citations, and excerpts. The citational web that spans the work provides some evidence of the self-consciousness with which al-Nuwayrī assumed the challenge of making his enormous compendium navigable. It also suggests that the hierarchy and modularity of the work were not accidental properties but features intended to enable a certain mode of reading—one based on selective access to an organized corpus of knowledge rather than a linear procession through the text from beginning to end. Without some kind of organizational structure (and absent the use of foliation), there would be no way of specifying the destination of a cross-reference. And without a considerable degree of thematic modularity, there would be no point. Cross-references reveal how the apparatus that al-Nuwayrī constructed was intended to work, sending readers to the places within the text where they could reasonably expect to find what they were looking for.

MAPPING THE CONTENTS OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

In addition to serving as navigation aids, cross-references often reflect a compiler's assumptions about how different fields of knowledge related to one another. A simple cross-reference, in this respect, while telling the medieval reader how to get from point "A" to point "B," also tells its modern reader how an author conceived of the relation between "A" and "B," the boundary between the two elements that the cross-reference aimed to bridge. For this reason, the *Ultimate Ambition*'s architecture might be understood as a kind of taxonomic apparatus as much as an organizational scheme, and to the extent that we regard it as such, we might ask what sorts of epistemological assumptions it reflects and what valences its contents acquire by virtue of their place in the overall system.

Addressing this question requires some examination of how the *Ultimate Ambition*'s formal plan maps onto the actual territory of the work. Al-Nuwayrī's elaborate table of contents tells the reader nothing about the relative sizes of books, sections, and chapters, which vary substantially across the *Ultimate Ambition*. The first chapter, on the creation of the heavens, happens to be its shortest one, fitting on a single manuscript folio.[16] Its last chapter, on the history of Islamic Egypt, is nearly two thousand times as long and spans six volumes.[17] The work's formal composition and symmetry belie the uneven distribution of its contents, even if it is the transparency of its composition that enables the reader to perceive the swollen heft of certain subject areas alongside the trifling presence of others. Such an approach is not so straightforward in the case of a more interpenetrated and digressive work, where subjects flow seamlessly into others. Al-Nuwayrī's categories, on the

whole, stand to be counted.[18]

The disparities in size between the various books of the *Ultimate Ambition* reveal an unusual aspect of its composition: the centrality of history to al-Nuwayrī's project. Book 5 of the *Ultimate Ambition*—a universal history, beginning with God's creation of Adam and Eve and going all the way through the final years of al-Nuwayrī's life—is over twice as long as the preceding four books combined. While it was not uncommon for Arabic literary compendia to include extensive quantities of historical narrative, these materials were usually interspersed throughout a work and in any case would not have been as copiously represented as in the case of al-Nuwayrī's text. The enormous size of book 5 vis-à-vis the rest of the *Ultimate Ambition* explains why most of al-Nuwayrī's biographers described his book as a work of history rather than adab, and it raises the question of what was at stake for al-Nuwayrī in insisting otherwise.

Beyond the disparity in size between the historical book and the rest of the work, one notes a similar unevenness across the second and third levels of al-Nuwayrī's organizational hierarchy, as we see in tables 2.5 and 2.6. How to make sense of this? When one takes into account the years that al-Nuwayrī spent laboring over the *Ultimate Ambition*, selecting his sources and arranging his materials, it stands to reason that his choices of what to include and exclude in his work carry some significance. Why, for example, is his discussion of famous singing slave girls ten times as long as his chapter on the planets? Is it notable that there is hardly any treatment of mathematics across the *Ultimate Ambition* but extensive amounts of practical medicine and *ḥadīth*? The internal consistency and deliberate construction of the work would seem to compel us to read its presences and absences as part of a self-conscious program, just as the *Ultimate Ambition*'s pretentions to comprehensiveness inflect the knowledge that it does not contain. One can speak, in other words, of the negative space of such a text, a conceptual realm that is more clearly demarcated than in the case of other less self-consciously expansive works.

TABLE 2.3. WORD COUNT BY BOOK (*FANN*)

BOOK TITLE	%
Heaven and Earth	3%
Human Being	21%
Animals	3%
Plants	3%
History	70%
Total	100%

TABLE 2.4. SECTION (*QISM*)
WORD COUNT ORDERED BY SIZE

SECTION TITLE	WORDS	%
Islamic history	1,401,933	40%
On rulers, advisors, scribes, etc.	198,459	6%
Praise, invective, wine, music, etc.	144,125	4%

5.4	Kings of China, Persia, etc. and the *Jāhiliyya*	1,424,613
5.3	Stories of Moses and his descendants	942,099
1.1	Etymology, morphology, genealogy, etc.	624,883
1.4	Congratulations, elegies, etc.	429,603
2.2	Pre-Islamic proverbs, practices, stories, etc.	310,578
3.5	Birds, fish, insects, hunting implements	261,610
3.3	Livestock	255,835
4.5	Perfumery, distillates, sexual medicines	251,177
1.5	Human geography	230,662
5.1	From Adam and Eve to People of the Ditch	190,962
5.2	Stories of Abraham and his descendants	177,328
1.4	Physical geography	140,952
4.2	Trees and fruit	101,722
1.3	Units of time, holidays, feasts	101,573
4.1	Plant origin, soil, foodstuffs, vegetables	100,435
1.2	Meteorological phenomena	93,404
3.1	Carnivores	83,456
4.4	Gardens, flowers, resins, mannas	83,472
4.3	Aromatic flowers	83,457
3.4	Venomous creatures	70,315
1.6	Heavens	60,359
3.2	Other wild beasts	59,732

TABLE 2.5. THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*'S TEN LARGEST CHAPTERS, ORDERED BY SIZE

§	CHAPTER TITLE	WORD COUNT	%
5.6	Egyptian history (8th–14th c.)	458,562	28.3%
5.5	Life of the Prophet Muḥammad	251,893	15.5%
5.6.3	The Umayyad state (Syria)	144,218	8.9%
5.6.4	The Abbasid state (Iraq and Egypt)	136,943	8.4%
2.5.4	Scribes and secretaryship	134,886	8.3%
5.6.2	The Rightly-Guided Caliphs	127,369	7.9%
5.6.10	Rulers of Iraq, Mosul, Syria, etc.	79,486	4.9%
2.3.6	Music	72,545	4.5%
5.6.6	Ifrīqiyya and the Maghrib	62,035	3.8%
5.6.8	Zanj, Qarāmiṭa, Khawārij, etc.	46,961	2.9%
Total		1,632,277	100.7%

Just as intriguing as the largest chapters and the absent chapters are the *Ultimate Ambition*'s shortest chapters. Why would al-Nuwayrī have composed five chapters in book 5 that are each less than one thousand words long and five chapters that are over one hundred thousand words long?[19] Could it be that he did not have the foresight to spread out the material more evenly for purposes of navigation, or that textual architecture was not an issue that al-Nuwayrī took very seriously? The plan of the work suggests otherwise, as I have already discussed.[20] How to explain, then, the equivalent hierarchical status given to subjects that are treated in radically different ways, such as history and cosmography (§5.0 vs. §1.0), wild beasts and statecraft (§3.2 vs. §2.5), or Seth and his children versus the Prophet Muḥammad's

biography (§5.1.2 vs. §5.5.1)? Addressing these questions depends upon an examination of al-Nuwayrī's structural models for his encyclopedic compendium, which I turn to below.

THE CLASSICAL ADAB ENCYCLOPEDIA

The structural features considered thus far—hierarchical arrangement, thematic modularity, cross-references, and foregrounded architecture—complicate the *Ultimate Ambition*'s relationship to other works in the adab tradition. As discussed in chapter 1, multithematic adab compendia constitute one of the oldest genres in Arabic literature, dating back to the ninth century. Intended to instruct and delight cultured individuals, they brought together a repertoire of literary and historical materials, the study, quotation, and emulation of which represented a shibboleth that granted entry to the ranks of the literati and scholars. The adab canon comprised monographs as well—works on specific themes such as "miserliness and generosity" or "relief after distress"—but the multithematic compendium (or adab encyclopedia, as it is often called) was particularly emblematic of the *paideia* of Abbasid court culture.

Most works in this tradition, like the seven canonical examples in table 2.6, were arranged according to linear rather than hierarchical sequences of chapters, sometimes grouped into clusters based on implicit themes. Like the *Ultimate Ambition,* they contained a range of materials including snippets of poetry, edifying prose narratives and reports about famous historical figures, Prophetic traditions, Quranic quotations, proverbs, anecdotal material, rare words and other philological curiosities, *materia medica*, quotes attributed to Greek and Persian sages, and practical philosophical and scientific writings. In some works, serious topics were treated near the beginning and entertaining materials reserved for the end, but this was not always the case. It is difficult, in fact, to delimit a common structural prototype across the field of literary compilations given the flexible character of the works in question.[21] However, at the most basic level, one observes a trend towards long chains of chapters rather than complex hierarchies, which is pervasive enough to set apart the *Ultimate Ambition*'s own structural arrangement as a significant anomaly.[22]

The difference between these two modes of composition might be expressed as a difference between hypotaxis and parataxis, two principles of order that derive from the study of literary syntax. A classical example of parataxis is Caesar's famous line "Veni, vidi, vici" ("I came, I saw, I conquered"), in which the three elements of the sentence are placed on the same syntactic level, giving the reader the impression that "diagnosing the situation ('I saw') and defeating the enemy ('I conquered') were no more difficult than simply appearing on the scene ('I came')."[23] This is in contrast to the principle of hypotaxis, which is based on subordination and hierarchy. A hypotactic reformulation of Caesar's statement might be: "Since it was I

who arrived, and I who saw how the land lay, the victory followed as a matter of course."[24] The relationships between the three elements of the original utterance are made explicit in the second statement and a logic of condition and outcome is established, with each element implicated in a larger framework.

Classical adab compendia tended be organized paratactically, juxtaposing their elements rather than ranking them. As we have already seen, the *Ultimate Ambition* wears hypotaxis on its sleeve. Its intricate scheme of books, sections, chapters, and cross-references was designed to domesticate the heterogeneity of its material, and its structural features are foregrounded rather than implicit. On the basis of this criterion alone, it is clear that the differences between the *Ultimate Ambition* and its encyclopedic cousins in the classical adab tradition extend beyond the matter of size.

TABLE 2.6. ARRANGEMENT OF SEVEN CLASSICAL ADAB ENCYCLOPEDIAS[25]

TEXT	ARRANGEMENT
Unique Necklace	Divided into quarters, each containing ten books: 1) sovereignty; 2) war; 3) rulership; 4) traits and morals; 5) knowledge; 6) piety; 7) friends; 8) needs; 9) food; 10) women. Each book contains unnumbered smaller chapters.
Virtuous Meadows	Divided into thirty books on the following subjects: 1) sovereignty; 2) war; 3) generous personages; 4) delegations to the Prophet Muḥammad; 5) addressing kings; 6) knowledge and adab; 7) proverbs; 8) moral exhortations and piety; 9) funeral orations; 10) genealogy and the virtues of the pre-Islamic Arabs; 11) language of the Bedouins; 12) repartees; 13) speeches; 14) epistolography; 15) the caliphs and their histories; 16) Ziyād and al-Ḥajjāj and other Umayyad figures; 17) the battles of the pre-Islamic Arabs; 18) the virtues of poetry; 19) poetic meters; 20) music; 21) women and their qualities; 22) false prophets and pariahs; 23) human qualities; 24) food and drink; 25) pleasantries.
The Four Sections	Four sections containing a large number of chapters with no clear principle of arrangement.[28] The work begins with chapters devoted to sayings of the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, then pursues a seemingly haphazard arrangement.[29]
Apt Couplets	Four volumes with twenty-five divisions and very large numbers of chapters. Begins with knowledge and religion; (2) rulership and government; (3) justice and injustice; (4) giving aid, morals, joking, shame; (5) praise and disparagement of paternity; (6) gratitude, praise, extolling; (7) ambitions, good fortunes, and hopes; (8) occupations, earnings, fickleness, wealth, and poverty; (9) gifts; (10) food and guests; (11) drink; (12) friendship; (13) dalliance; (14) courage; (15) marriage and divorce; (16) vulgarity and frivolity; (17) human countenances; (18) clothing and scent; (19) the disparagement of the world and its trials; (20) religious beliefs and observances; (21) death; (22) heavens, seasons, places, waters, plants, trees, and fires; (23) angels and jinn; (24) animals; (25) miscellaneous topics.
The Beauty of Sentiments	Two volumes containing 132 chapters. Begins with the Qur'an and the Prophet and then moves to poetry and proverbs of the Arabs, Persians, and Greeks. One might superimpose a larger thematic framework on the chapter order, but the basic arrangement is a long string of chapters with no discernible subchapters.
Spring of the Ideal	Two volumes containing thirty-two chapters. Each chapter begins with a discussion of the Qur'an, then moves to the Prophet, then the Companions and Successors, notable believers, and the like, then the sages of the Arabs and the Persians and

others, then the Hebrew prophets, and finally any relevant poetry. Chapters follow a seemingly thematic order, beginning with more cosmological topics (heaven, earth, elements, time, etc.) and then on to ethical issues.

The Twelve Mines (al-Ḥamīdī, 562/1166): twelve chapters following a loose arrangement of themes: (a) the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, his family, Companions, and Successors (chapter 1); (b) statecraft and good governance (chapters 2–3); (c) ethical topics, such as miserliness, bravery, cowardice, loyalty, jealousy, honesty, deception, and modesty (chapters 4–16); (d) samples of poetry and belletristic prose on topics such as praise, congratulations, elegy, invective, description, and love poetry (chapters 17–29); (e) the arts of prose, including sermons, epistles, and proverbs, (chapters 30–33); (f) miscellaneous staples of the adab canon, such as the superstitions of the pre-Islamic Arabs, stories of relief after distress, poverty and wealth, travel, wine, singing, party-crashing, and other topics (chapters 34–50).

The Exquisite Domain (al-Ṭughrāʾī, 515/1121): thirty-four chapters with subtopics, arranged in clusters such as laudable speech (proverbs, rhetoric, prompt repartees, oratory, and poetry), politics (sovereignty, ministers, justice, injustice, etc.), ethics (generosity, miserliness, discretion, treachery, etc.), natural history (animals, wonders of creation, jinns, gems, etc.), and the good life (wine, music, singers, women, etc.).

One Volume Containing Forty-four Chapters (al-Ḥuṣrī, d. 453/1061): [illegible]

In these adab collections, there is no organizational pattern as conventional as, for instance, the arrangements of philosophical encyclopedias in the Avicennan tradition, or the hexaemeral schemes found in thirteenth-century European compendia. A general trend can be discerned in some works towards linear chapter sequences grouped by theme (as with al-Zamakhsharī's *Springtime of the Pious*, which moves from cosmological to ethical topics) but other times grouped according to no logic at all (as with al-Ḥuṣrī's *Flower of Literary Arts*). In al-Rāghib's *Apt Quotables*, the internal structure is largely hypotactic, which makes the perfect aphorism easy to find, but it is subsumed under an overarching paratactic sequence. Its highest hierarchical level of twenty-five chapters could be thought of as corresponding to al-Nuwayrī's intermediate level of twenty-five sections, but the order of *Apt Quotables'* chapters does not conform to any recognizable pattern, while the *Ultimate Ambition*'s sections are ordered according to the logic of each book.[35]

Structural dynamics are highly determinative of the overall character, outlook, and function of encyclopedic texts. Structure seems to play a different syntagmatic role in these works than it does in the *Ultimate Ambition*: it does not posit similarly complex relations of thematic subordination and hierarchy. Régis Blachère found this hierarchical character of al-Nuwayrī's work to be "artificial, rigid, and tyrannical," complaining that it forced its author to use cross-references to orient his readers.[36] But, as discussed earlier, the system of cross-references was not an unintended consequence of the work's architecture; it was a mechanism used by al-Nuwayrī both to knit together and to separate the different parts of this enormous book.

A final compositional feature that sets the *Ultimate Ambition* apart from the adab works surveyed above brings us back to the matter of scale. While earlier works were composed of "literary microunits"—snippets, statements, anecdotes, what Abd el-Fattah Kilito refers to as "discours rapporté"—the

Ultimate Ambition is a concatenation of much larger sources: epistles, whole chapters, even abridgments of entire works.[37] As I discuss in chapters 3 and 5, this represents an important hallmark of Mamluk encyclopedism, the working methods of its authors, and the authoritative status of written testimony.[38] In al-Nuwayrī, we have a fundamentally bookish compiler, one who did not shy away from recounting his personal experiences, but who saw his role as one of dismantling, editing, and reconstituting other sources to fit his synthetic vision. As we saw in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s preface, al-Nuwayrī regarded the oral transmission of knowledge as an ineffective method for navigating a literary patrimony. Consultation of written sources had long since become the order of the day.

COSMOGRAPHY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Premodern encyclopedic texts tend to be formally conservative: structural templates evolve slowly, and one must be attuned to recognize "subtle changes and shifts of emphasis" when placing these works in their relative contexts.[39] These changes and shifts are, in the case of the *Ultimate Ambition* and the adab tradition, not terribly subtle. They mark out this work as a significant deviation from a recognizable textual paradigm, which may explain why it was not recognized by its medieval readers as a member of that paradigm, and raises questions about why al-Nuwayrī claimed it as one.

We begin to find answers to these questions when we consider that the *Ultimate Ambition*'s organizational blueprint is traceable to the work of one of al-Nuwayrī's contemporaries, the encyclopedist Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 718/1318), an Egyptian bookseller known for his wide-ranging knowledge of books. His biographers describe him as a worthy litterateur who deployed his erudition and aesthetic taste in the production of literary compilations,[40] including a two-volume anthology entitled *The Blazes of Bright Qualities and the Disgraces of Shameful Defects* (*Ghurar al-khaṣāʾiṣ al-wāḍiḥa wa-ʿurar al-naqāʾiṣ al-fāḍiḥa*)[41] and a four-volume encyclopedic compendium, *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts* (*Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*).[42]

While not much is known about him, what little information exists suggests that al-Waṭwāṭ was a figure whose network of acquaintances, friends, and enemies comprised not only other men of letters, but also officials within the imperial bureaucracy and prominent members of the religious establishment.[43] Despite his best efforts, he was unable to secure a position within the state yet still managed to acquire a degree of prominence within learned circles. On one occasion, when his attempts were rebuffed to parlay his acquaintance with a chief judge into an appointment as his assistant, al-Waṭwāṭ sought the intercession of several other judges and prominent figures, who wrote epistles on his behalf. Al-Waṭwāṭ collected these epistles into an anthology and invited other well-known individuals to contribute laudatory

blurbs to it. The collection failed to persuade al-Waṭwāṭ's prospective employer of his industriousness, but it interested the great historian and litterateur Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī enough to include it in his commonplace book.[44] Despite the fact that al-Nuwayrī enjoyed much more professional success than al-Waṭwāṭ, the two men are similar in other respects. Each of them came by their erudition through their experiences as manuscript copyists and parlayed this familiarity with classical sources into their own compilatory work. Both were accomplished writers of episotlary prose, but neither was a good poet. This shortcoming meant that, for both men, compilation was their principal means of participating in the literary scene.

TABLE 2.7. CONTENTS OF AL-WAṬWĀṬ'S *DELIGHTFUL CONCEPTS AND THE PATHS TO PRECEPTS*[45]

CHAPTER TITLE
The First Book, on the Heavens
On the creation of the heavens and their structure
On the planets
On the fixed stars and the constellations
On the stations of the moon and their conjoined asterisms
On the meteorological phenomenon
On the nights and days
On the months and years
On the seasons and their times
On the holidays of different peoples and their feasts
The Second Book, on the Earth
On the creation of the earth and its configuration
On the mountains and minerals
On the seas and islands
On the springs and rivers
On the genealogies of those in the inhabited parts of the Earth
On the regions that the Muslims explored
On the qualities of different lands and their inhabitants
On old buildings and ruins
On descriptions of fortresses and dwellings
The Third Book, on Animals
On the qualities of the human being
On the nature of those possessing tooth and claw
On the nature of the wild animal
On the nature of domestic animals
On the nature of insects and vermin
On the nature of birds of prey and scavenger birds
On the nature of common birds
On the nature of nocturnal birds and winged insects
On the nature of the animals of the sea and amphibious ones
The Fourth Book, on Plants
On the creation of plants
On the soil that is suitable to plants
On the farming of pulses and legumes
On the farming of different types of greens
On the farming of plants whose fruit have peels
On the farming of plants whose fruit have stones

07 the farming of plants whose fruit have neither peel nor stone
08 the farming of different types aromatic plants
09 the trees productive of mannas and gum resins

The fact of al-Nuwayrī's debt to al-Waṭwāṭ's four-volume compendium, *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts*, has been noted by scholars, but the precise nature of this debt has not been appreciated. Al-Waṭwāṭ's work is composed of four principal books (called *funūn*, as in the *Ultimate Ambition*) on the following subjects: (a) the heavens; (b) the earth; (c) animals; and (d) plants. In an early study of al-Waṭwāṭ's text, Jirjis al-Ḥalabī pointed out the formal similarities between *Delightful Concepts* and the *Ultimate Ambition*,[46] and the Russian orientalist Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ later suggested that al-Waṭwāṭ's text had provided the basic paradigm for a range of Mamluk encyclopedic works, the *Ultimate Ambition* betraying the most obvious sign of influence.[47] Krachkovskiĭ further showed that al-Nuwayrī had relied on *Delightful Concepts* extensively for content in his botanical section,and that the order of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s chapters and sections indicated that the *Delightful Concepts* was in fact al-Nuwayrī's principal structural inspiration.[48]

A careful examination of both works reveals that the inspiration was not limited to structure, nor was the material that al-Nuwayrī took from *Delightful Concepts* confined to the book on plants. Book 1 of the *Ultimate Ambition* is deeply indebted to al-Waṭwāṭ's first two books, in form and content. It follows largely the same chapter and subchapter sequence as *Delightful Concepts* and reproduces much of its material (just as *Delightful Concepts* relies extensively on the works of al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Masʿūdī, Ibn Waḥshiyya, Ibn Abī al-Ashʿath, and other figures). Al-Nuwayrī does not attempt to conceal his dependence on al-Waṭwāṭ, nor does he mention his source in every instance, which is perhaps why Amīna Jamāl al-Dīn and others have incorrectly assumed that al-Nuwayrī's sources for these three books included a wider array of texts than was the case.[49]

In fact, al-Nuwayrī relied principally on a single text for these volumes, faithfully preserving many of al-Waṭwāṭ's internal citations to earlier works. There are additions, deletions, and modifications of *Delightful Concepts*' materials—which reveal something about al-Nuwayrī's own interests and prejudices, as I discuss in chapter 3—but there is no mistaking the fact that the *Ultimate Ambition* essentially swallowed *Delightful Concepts* whole, adjusted it in certain ways, and reproduced it in the form of its own first, third, and fourth books. Most importantly for our purposes, we see that *Delightful Concepts* provided the template for the *Ultimate Ambition*'s hypotactic architecture, which al-Nuwayrī expanded considerably to include two additional books.

Where did the structural template for al-Waṭwāṭ's work originate? Did al-Waṭwāṭ invent it himself or was he working within an identifiable generic

tradition? While a full study of *Delightful Concepts* is beyond the scope of this book, it is worth briefly considering a few points that shed some light on the relationship between these two texts. Al-Waṭwāṭ's work was one of several cosmographical compilations produced between the mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries, texts that depend upon each other in different ways and share a considerable stock of natural historical material (see table 2.8).[50]

TABLE 2.8. COSMOGRAPHICAL COMPILATIONS OF THE 13TH–14TH CENTURIES

TEXT	ARRANGEMENT AND SOURCES
The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existence (*ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt*) by Zakariyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283)	Arrangement: Two main divisions: supernatural beings (angels, planets, one dominion of the heavens); section two is split into four elements (fire, air, water, earth). Animals are divided into eight chapters, and within those chapters the animals are presented in alphabetical order. Zoological sections treat both traits (*ṭabāʾiʿ*) and occult properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of animals. Sources: Various cosmographical texts, especially the anonymous thirteenth century *Ṭuḥfat al-gharāʾib*.
Rarities of Beings: On the Medicinal Properties of Animals (*Nafāʾis al-kawn fī manāfiʿ al-ḥayawān*) by Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir (d. 701/1301)[52]	Arrangement: Zoological material only, arranged alphabetically and treating both traits as well as medical and occult properties. Sources: Many authors are mentioned, with noteworthy absences such as Ibn Bakhtīshūʿ's *Manāfiʿ al-ḥayawān*, al-Qazwīnī's *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt*, and Ibn Sīnā.[53] His main sources are the same that we find in al-Waṭwāṭ, al-Nuwayrī, and Ibn al-Athīr: al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Masʿūdī, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, Aristotle and other Greek naturalists, and Ibn Abī al-Ashʿath.
Delightful Concepts on the Forms of Animals (*Nafāʾis al-fikar fī ashkāl al-ḥayawān*) by Ibn al-Durayhim (d. 718/1318)	Arrangement: Four books, nine chapters each. Animals are treated in different chapters, with traits (book 1) and occult properties (book 2) separated. Sources: Mainly from both Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir's *Badāʾiʿ* and al-Qazwīnī's *ʿAjāʾib*. This text notably does not contain medical or occult material but adds literature (poetry and epistles). Sources: Al-Waṭwāṭ's material on the qualities of animals (*ṭabāʾiʿ*) probably comes from Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir's *Badāʾiʿ*, as do his quotes from Ibn Abī al-Ashʿath and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī.[54]
Rarities of Wonders and Varieties of Marvels (*Nafāʾis al-ʿajāʾib wa-ṭarāʾif al-gharāʾib*) by Ibn al-Durayhim (d. 737/1337)[55]	Arrangement: Four sections: (1) space; (2) time; (3) wonders and geography; (4) natural kingdoms (minerals, animals, and plants). The structure of the text closely resembles al-Qazwīnī's *ʿAjāʾib*, and the order of the presentation of animals is identical, containing both traits (*ṭabāʾiʿ*) and occult properties (*khawāṣṣ*).[56] Sources: Al-Qazwīnī, al-Waṭwāṭ, and Ibn al-Durayhim, but not Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir, with whom his zoological material is almost identical.[57]

When placed in the company of these texts, al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* begins to feel at home, formally speaking. One finds echoes of its upper-level divisions in al-Qazwīnī's *Wonders of Creation* along with al-Waṭwāṭ and Ibn al-Athīr's compendia, and all three of those works are hierarchically arranged like the *Ultimate Ambition,* in contrast to the paratactic arrangements of most of the adab works considered earlier. Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir's *Rarities of Beings*, while formally paratactic, is alphabetically arranged and thus easy to consult; much of its zoological material found its way into al-Nuwayrī's third book by way of al-Waṭwāṭ's *Delightful Concepts*.[58] The latter work is the only one among these four that transmits extensive amounts of literary material, while doing away with medical topics (*manāfiʿ*).

Reading the *Ultimate Ambition* in the context of this thirteenth- and fourteenth-century cosmographical tradition helps bring into focus the reasons

behind the extreme disparity in the size of its chapters, as discussed earlier. The textual architecture that al-Nuwayrī inherited from al-Waṭwāṭ was designed to navigate a compendium with small chapters, such as those found in *Delightful Concepts*, which are typically around two thousand to three thousand words long and fit on four to five manuscript folios. The two new books that al-Nuwayrī added to al-Waṭwāṭ's original model (book 2 on the human being and book 5 on history) make up over nine-tenths of the *Ultimate Ambition* and contain chapters that are many times larger than those in *Delightful Concepts*.

If textual navigation was a priority for al-Nuwayrī, as I've argued above, how did he envision his readers accessing this material? In addressing this question, it is important to establish that while books 2 and 5 of the *Ultimate Ambition* are indeed much larger than the other three books, their internal arrangement is more uneven. As is apparent in table 2.4, the first two sections of book 5 (§5.1 and §5.2) are comprised of chapters with the same average size as those in the books that al-Nuwayrī took from al-Waṭwāṭ, and so the basic tripartite book-section-chapter division remained an effective means of navigation. It is only in the last three sections of book 5 that the chapters begin to grow much larger, culminating in the enormous final chapter (§5.5.12), which alone makes up nearly a fifth of the entire *Ultimate Ambition*. Book 2 is similarly uneven: about half of its chapters are comparable in size to those in the *Delightful Concepts*, while the rest are significantly larger.[59]

How did al-Nuwayrī imagine that the largest chapters of the *Ultimate Ambition* would be read? In many cases, the arrangement established by the table of contents extends beyond books, sections, and chapters and into the domain of subchapters and even sub-subchapters. While these are not numbered systematically, they are generally set off in the text with rubricated titles and running headers, making them easy to consult. Furthermore, there are organizational schemes that can be observed nestled within the main architecture that provide alternative means of textual navigation when the broader hierarchy does not parse the work's contents finely enough. A subchapter on pre-Islamic Arabic proverbs (§2.2.1.7) that spans over one hundred pages and contains thirty-four sub-subchapters is arranged alphabetically, following the pattern of the work it draws upon (al-Maydānī's *Proverbs*).[60] Other chapters contain lengthy titles in which all of the individual subchapters are listed in the order in which they will appear in the text, which further aids navigation.[61]

In the fifth book on history, where single chapters swell to the size of entire volumes, al-Nuwayrī introduced a form of textual navigation that had few if any precedents in Islamic historiography. Rather than structure this book according to the widely prevalent annalistic arrangement, he opted for a different method, which he outlined in the preface to book 5:

> Having seen that most people who composed the history of the Muslims arranged their works based on the annalistic principle rather than that of dynasties, I determined that such an arrangement deprived the reader of the pleasure of an event that might delight him, and a matter that he might seek to understand. The account of each year [in annalistic chronicles] comes to an end without the reader learning its outcome, neither in summary nor in detail. The historian then moves on to the beginning of the next year, returning to the same events and reports. He goes from east to west, from peace to war, from south to north, from morning to evening, while the horse of digression roams freely with him, taking him far off course. Large dunes interpose between him and his destination, such that he sometimes finds himself in a valley and other times at a summit. Meanwhile, the reader may pick up the thread of what interests him only with great difficulty, and so he drops it when the distance and journey became too great.
>
> I decided, therefore, to organize this history on the basis of states, and not to pass beyond the boundaries of a state once I had begun discussing it until I had laid out its history from beginning to end, recounting the sum of its battles and its exploits, the stories of its kings, the locations of its kingdoms, and the branchings of its routes. After [recounting] the expiration of its term and the perishing of its people, who leave but a trace behind them, I would turn to a different state and follow its path, explaining its history and elucidating its experience. I recount [each state's] origins and enumerate its genealogies, beginning with its root and lauding the exploits of its distinguished citizens. I have investigated one state after another in this fashion, and the stallions of reading have carried me away on a remarkable voyage! In light of all this, I have sought to be succinct but not overly so, and I have set forth what must be said without repetition or prolixity . . .
>
> In organizing this book, I have followed the same principle as the previous books, so as to make things simpler to the soul, livelier to the mind, and more delightful to the eye. I have, therefore, given it five divisions and composed it with the finest harmony and most perfect order.[62]

These remarks, along with the various navigational mechanisms embedded within the *Ultimate Ambition* provide additional evidence for al-Nuwayrī's interest in the ways that different forms of textual arrangement engendered diverse modes of reading. The annalistic form of historiographical narrative, as he notes, makes for a disjointed read (although he would adopt it in the final few volumes of the work, once he began to treat the events of his own lifetime). The dynastic arrangement thematizes its historical material, arranging it into topical divisions, much like the rest of the work. A reader interested in the history of the Mongol Empire, for instance, need not

reconstruct it over the course of ten volumes; the entire history is contained within a 150-page section in a single volume. Similarly, cosmographical and geographical topics are contained within one volume, zoological and botanical material within three and a half volumes, and scribal practice receives a mini-monograph of its own at the end of book 2. Each volume ends at a break in the work's formal architecture, evidence that al-Nuwayrī assumed that many of his readers would engage with his work on a volume-by-volume basis, rather than consuming it whole, a time-consuming and expensive proposition.

The decision to parse the historical material on a dynastic basis reflects a second, parallel mode of reading alongside the targeted access engendered by cross-referencing and compact chapters. The larger unbroken chapters were probably intended to be read in their entirety, such that the reader would not be deprived of "the pleasure of an event that might delight him." Perhaps it is still not too difficult to imagine, in our present age of rapid information access, that a reader would immerse himself in several hundred pages of a historical text, rather than cherry-picking a line of poetry from a well-organized literary compendium. Al-Nuwayrī's book, it seems, offered both modes of engagement.

THE GENESIS OF ENCYCLOPEDIC FORMS

A bird's-eye view of the *Ultimate Ambition* reveals that al-Nuwayrī composed his work by expanding a cosmographical model with the addition of a universal chronicle, an anthology of literary and ethical materials, and a voluminous treatment of secretaryship. The result was a book that was not recognizably a literary anthology, a cosmographical compendium, a chronicle, a pharmocopia, or a scribal manual, but an amalgam of all of these genres. Al-Nuwayrī's endeavor amounted to a totalization of adab, an appropriation of this familiar category as an umbrella for a broader range of disciplines and genres.

When one looks beyond the *Ultimate Ambition* to other works populating the landscape of compilatory literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the formal hybridity of al-Nuwayrī's text does not appear to be unusual. The two other members of the Mamluk encyclopedic triumvirate—Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī and Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī—similarly sought to affiliate their encyclopedic compendia with longstanding textual traditions even though they overflowed with materials unrelated to their stated focus. Ibn Faḍl Allāh writes in his preface that he compiled the *Routes of Insight into the Civilized Realms* as a corrective to outdated geographical works. However, like the *Ultimate Ambition*, Ibn Faḍl Allāh's compendium exploded the traditional boundaries of its discipline, incorporating so many extrinsic elements from other genres and knowledge practices that it came to represent a different species of text altogether.

Divided into two uneven sections of four and twenty-three volumes, only

the first part of *Routes of Insight* was systematically devoted to geographical topics; the second, much larger, part was concerned mainly with history. A great proportion of the work consists of biographies of famous personages of the Islamic world arranged by professional categories (e.g., Quran reciters, jurists, lexicographers, grammarians, philosophers, singers, chancery scribes, poets, and others) and organized along the conceit of the equivalence between East and West (*al-inṣāf bayna l-mashriq wa-l-maghrib*). Ibn Faḍl Allāh was not agnostic on this question; much of *Routes of Insight* seems to have been a response to the famous compendium by Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī (d. 685/1286), *The Extraordinary [Book] on the Delights of the Maghrib* (*al-Mughrib fī ḥulā l-Maghrib*), which exalted the history and literature of the Islamic West.[63] Despite the geographical organizing principle, however, the text has little in common with the tradition to which it purports to belong.

Similarly, in the preface to his fourteen-volume *Dawn for the Night-Blind: On the Craft of Chancery Writing*, al-Qalqashandī identifies other, much slimmer, scribal manuals as the inspiration for his work. Although the main portion of his book was devoted to furnishing the aspiring clerk with sample letters and protocols of official address, it also covered such diverse topics as meteorological phenomena, foreign relations, the operation of water-clocks, the geography of the Mamluk Empire and neighboring realms, and many other subjects. Like al-Nuwayrī, al-Qalqashandī employed a hypotactic architecture and a system of cross-references to organize his materials, one that was considerably more complex than the tripartite arrangement of the *Ultimate Ambition,* as can be seen in this excerpt from the beginning of the book:

> Section two of chapter one of book one is about the indispensable knowledge for the scribe in the field of *inshāʾ* (the composition of documents), it is divided into two paragraphs; the first is on the skills a scribe needs and this paragraph is divided into fifteen subparagraphs; the first is about the Arabic language and has four divisions; the first division is about the superiority of the Arabic language over other languages and on how it distinguishes itself from the other languages.[64]

Maaike van Berkel has argued that al-Qalqashandī aimed to surpass the administrative focus of the genre of scribal compendia in the tradition of Ibn Qutayba's *Secretary's Art* "by integrating lengthy geographical, zoological, historical and cosmological entries . . . [placing] his work in the tradition of the encyclopedic masterpieces of his day."[65] Curiously, although al-Qalqashandī was aware of al-Nuwayrī's work—citing the *Ultimate Ambition* at least eight times in the course of *Dawn for the Night-Blind* and probably also drawing upon it in many other instances without direct citation—neither he nor Ibn Faḍl Allāh claimed to be following in al-Nuwayrī's footsteps.[66] Rather, al-Qalqashandī pays homage to Ibn Faḍl Allāh in the preface of his book, but it was the latter's one-volume secretarial manual and not the

encyclopedic *Routes of Insight* that he claimed as an inspiration.[67]

In sum, each member of the Mamluk encyclopedic triumvirate identified itself unambiguously, in its title and prefatory remarks, as an exemplar of an established classical genre—belles-lettres (adab), geography (*masālik wa-mamālik*), and chancery writing (*inshāʾ*)—while dispensing with the traditional organizing principles and conceptual borders of these genres. In other corners of the Mamluk book world, the connection to traditional compilatory forms underwent similar transformation. Literary anthologies proliferated on every conceivable subject and witnessed great development and diversification. Alongside the familiar collections of a poet's oeuvre, there were volumes devoted to epistles, epigrams, official documents, and *maqāma*s, by writers both alive and dead, along with collections of excerpts on a single theme or literary device, such as birthmarks, the qualities of the eye, rhetorical figures such as the double entendre and paronomasia, and vernacular strophic forms such as the *zajal* and *muwashshaḥ*.[68]

The genre of anthologies allows us to spy in miniature some of the compositional forces at work in the genesis of encyclopedic forms. An important new type of work in this regard was the commentary-anthology, which was inaugurated by a work of Ibn Nubāta's entitled *The Clear-Eyed Explication of Ibn Zaydūn's Epistle* (*Sarḥ al-ʿuyūn fī sharḥ risālat Ibn Zaydūn*), a commentary on a letter by the famous eleventh-century Andalusian courtier. In principle, the practice of commenting poetry (and, less commonly, prose) was as old as classical Arabic literature. However, Ibn Nubāta's innovation was to combine his commentary with encyclopedic digressions and detailed explications of the epistle, bringing to bear upon it a great quantity of other literary texts from the classical Arabic canon.[69] The result was a wide-ranging tour through the Islamic literary and intellectual tradition using Ibn Zaydūn's work as an organizational conceit and spanning nearly six hundred pages in its modern edition. The commentary project itself becomes something of an afterthought, a conceit deployed by Ibn Nubāta to offer up, in Thomas Bauer's words, an "intersection of manifold discourses on literature and society as a whole."[70]

Ibn Nubāta's innovation provided the template for several other important commentary-anthologies. Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, one of Ibn Nubāta's students, composed his own commentary on Ibn Zaydūn's letter entitled *Completing the Texts in the Explication of Ibn Zaydūn's Epistle* (*Tamām al-mutūn fī sharḥ risālat Ibn Zaydūn*), modeled on his teacher's work. Al-Ṣafadī then struck out on his own with a celebrated anthology, *Flowing Desert Rains in the Commentary upon the L-Poem of the Non-Arabs* (*al-Ghayth al-musajjam fī sharḥ Lāmiyyat al-ʿAjam*), an enormous encyclopedic commentary upon a famous early Arabic poem.[71] Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, one of the most prolific poets of the fifteenth century, drew upon al-Ṣafadī's model for his commentary, *The Treasury of Literature and the Heart's Desire* (*Khizānat al-adab wa-ghāyat al-arab*), which explicated one of his own

poems in a similarly encyclopedic fashion. The poem he chose belonged to a genre known as the *badīʿiyya*, a panegyric devoted to the Prophet Muḥammad in which each line contained a different rhetorical device. Ibn Ḥijja's *badīʿiyya* was a kind of poetic summa of literary figures, containing over 150 in total, which made his *Treasury of Literature* an encyclopedic commentary upon an encyclopedic poem. As is evident from the manuscript folio seen in figure 2.1, the challenge posed to the traditional philological commentary genre by this new encyclopedic form was not just theoretical; the sprawl of digressions, glosses, and parenthetical remarks threatened to overwhelm the source text entirely, and indeed to spill over into the margins reserved for the comments of future readers.

The commentary-anthology offers us a view of the essential operations of summary, amplification, and concatenation that were productive of much encyclopedic diversity and disciplinary interpenetration in this period's literature. Alongside literary anthologies, the genre of historical chronicles provides many other examples of this encyclopedic sprawl. Scores of histories were composed between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and assumed different forms, including traditional annals, dynastic chronicles, genealogies, and biographies of rulers. As Ulrich Haarmann, Bernd Radtke, and others have observed, a new feature of this historiographical production was the increased presence of literary materials alongside the documentary.[72] Like the commentary-anthology, the chronicle absorbed and reformulated other discourses, becoming, as Li Guo has proposed, "not only a record of factual events, but a register of Muslim religious learning and a selective anthology of Arabic cultural heritage."[73]

FIGURE 2.1. Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, Badīʿiyya (Leiden MS Or. 72, fol. 29a; © Leiden University, used with permission).

This is particularly apparent in the burgeoning genre of biographical dictionaries. As the study of law became an important form of preparatory training for aspirants to the ranks of the civilian elite, a situation obtained whereby the political and religious establishments became mutually reinforcing, with the state patronizing the scholarly activities of the ʿulamāʾ in

exchange for their bureaucratic services.[74] A distinctive token of the self-consciously corporate nature of this class was the explosion of biographical literature during this period, primarily in the form of multivolume, alphabetically arranged onomastica. Many of these texts were devoted to the notable jurists of different legal schools, but others mapped the intellectual boundaries of other scholarly communities as well, from grammarians to Quranic exegetes to ḥadīth transmitters. As Wadad al-Qadi has suggested, the production of these texts marked an important development in the self-consciousness of the learned elite. Not merely lists of names, these works rather presented an "alternative history" of the Muslim community, written by scholars for scholars, as opposed to the political chronicle, which had an administrative focus.[75] Many combined samples of poetry and fine prose by the individuals memorialized in their pages, along with lists of their books, teachers, professional appointments, and descendants.

The Mamluk period was also a moment of great lexicographical activity. The largest Arabic dictionary in the history of the language, *The Arab Tongue* (*Lisān al-ʿarab*), was composed during al-Nuwayrī's lifetime and would not be superseded for half a millennium. Regarded as a landmark work not merely because of its size but because it incorporated literary and historical materials into the traditional lexicon format, its author Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311) produced his twenty-volume dictionary in the course of a career as a judge, a chancery official, and a compiler of literary texts. His specialty was abridging works of adab and historiography; al-Ṣafadī estimates that these works alone numbered five hundred volumes, including an abridgment of Ibn ʿAsākir's (d. 499/1175) seventy-two-volume *History of Damascus* (*Taʾrīkh Dimashq*) to a fourth of its size, and a reorganization of Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Book of Songs* (*Kitāb al-aghānī*) by alphabetical order. "I don't know of a single work of *adab* that he has not abridged," al-Ṣafadī admitted in his admiring biography of the great lexicographer.

An even more successful dictionary, *The Encircling Ocean* (*al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*)—indeed a work so widely used that the first word of its title would become the modern Arabic term for "dictionary"—was composed by the polymath Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415) a few decades after Ibn Manẓūr's death. Al-Fīrūzābādī's ambition was to write a dictionary that integrated and expanded the contents of two earlier multivolume lexicons by Ibn Sīdā (d. 458/1066) and al-Ṣāghānī (d. 650/1252), *The Masterful* (*al-Muḥkam*) and *The Swollen Waves* (*al-ʿUbāb*), respectively. He made plans for a monumental work in sixty or perhaps one hundred volumes, with the title *The Brilliant and Wondrous Work Combining "The Masterful" and "The Swollen Waves"* (*al-Lāmiʿ al-muʿallam al-ʿujāb al-jāmiʿ li-l-Muḥkam wa-l-ʿUbāb*). Alas, it was not to be. After five volumes, al-Fīrūzābādī abandoned the project but decided to abridge the unfinished work, and his *Encircling Ocean* was the result. This dictionary, in other words, was an abridgment of a compilation that was never even completed. Ironically, it would later serve as

the base text for the type of summative dictionary that its author had hoped to write, the eighteenth-century *Bride's Crown* (*Tāj al-ʿarūs*) by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī.[76]

It is beyond the scope of this book to explore the encyclopedic transformations in every genre during the Mamluk period, even in so cursory a fashion as I have done above. My aim is simply to propose that the processes of summary, abridgement, amplification, commentary, concatenation, and reorganization that reconfigured the anthology, the chronicle, the biographical dictionary, and the lexicon, along with ḥadīth concordances and works of exegesis help to contextualize the generic hybridity of al-Nuwayrī's work. These processes were the pathways upon which texts in familiar genres traveled en route to more encyclopedic destinations. Such bookish methods were not new, but the scale with which this omnivorous approach was adopted in so many areas of book production seems to have been unprecedented.

The reasons for the attraction of these methods in this time and place must await further study. A promising starting point may be found in the fact that many compilers wrote in multiple fields, which facilitated the cross-pollination of structural formats, principles of order, and a body of quotable materials. Al-Nuwayrī is a rare example of a large-scale compiler who was a single-book author; many of his contemporaries were active in several disciplines. However, al-Nuwayrī's experience as a manuscript copyist must have provided him with the requisite exposure to books in different genres, as we will see in chapter 5.

In chapter 3, I turn to the question of what sort of synthesis the *Ultimate Ambition* advances, in light of the heterogeneity and diversity of its materials. As we have seen, the stucture of the text indicates that al-Nuwayrī did a fastidious job of separating his materials. Did he put them back together in such a way that could be called synthetic? I consider this question by exploring al-Nuwayrī's approach to the sources of the *Ultimate Ambition* and the types of arguments he advances to reconcile contradictions within them.

CHAPTER THREE

SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

TOWARD THE END OF HIS LIFE, the historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) took up residence in Cairo, a city he described as possessing more "abundant sedentary culture" than anywhere else on earth. "It is the mother of the world, the great center of Islam, and the mainspring of the sciences and the crafts," Ibn Khaldūn observed in his *Prolegomenon* (*Muqaddima*), and yet this cultural abundance came at a cost. So many books had been written in different fields that scholars could scarcely hope to master the texts within their own narrow specialties.[1] This problem was grave enough to endanger humanity's quest for knowledge, Ibn Khaldūn wrote, as a student's entire lifetime "would not suffice to know all the literature that exists in a single discipline," let alone the essential texts of a comprehensive education, surely the "intended fruit" of one's studies. The solution to this dilemma, he concluded, was the production of even more books—abridgements, epitomes, and commentaries—to help the novice wend his way through the great forest of classical school texts.[2]

The trope of an overabundance of books is common to many intellectual traditions and historical epochs, yet there is no period of medieval Islamic history as widely associated with a surfeit of textual production as the two and a half centuries of Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria.[3] Much of this bookish activity was associated with the world of higher education. Between 1298 and 1341, over five hundred structures were built or renovated across the Mamluk Empire, including some of the most important monuments of Cairo and Damascus.[4] Many of these structures were educational institutions—madrasas, Sufi lodges, *ḥadīth* instruction schools—among the most visible of which was the madrasa bearing the sultan's name, the Nāṣiriyya, where al-Nuwayrī lived and probably composed the *Ultimate Ambition*.

Most of the hundreds of madrasas in fourteenth-century Egypt and Syria were funded through the patronage of the Mamluk political elite, with some established by wealthy merchants and scholars.[5] The reason for the emergence of such a widely patronized and institutionalized educational enterprise at this

time is the subject of debate.[6] Some have argued that the Mamluks supported the scholarly class as a strategy of political co-optation in order to gain legitimacy as the leaders of the Sunni world. Others have suggested that the impetus was not political but economic: pious endowments functioned as tax shelters and effective mechanisms to pass wealth on to one's descendants.[7] Given the number of educational institutions constructed during al-Nuwayrī's lifetime alone, it is reasonable to suppose that a variety of factors were behind the boom.

The impact that these institutions had upon the transmission of knowledge is also a matter of debate. Jonathan Berkey has made a case for "the persistent informality of Islamic education," arguing that even during the heyday of the madrasa in the Mamluk period, education remained a largely personal and flexible affair.[8] Carl Petry has proposed that such a view does not take into account the evidence that academic institutions—not just individuals—held considerable cachet in the world of Mamluk higher learning.[9] The debate over the informality of Islamic education will continue to be shaped by emerging insights about pedagogical traditions, but it is generally accepted that the construction of educational institutions during this period had a profound impact upon the social context of scholarship, even if the private interaction between student and teacher remained informal. In many cases, substantial budgets were allocated for the upkeep of educational facilities, residences for students and instructors, and full-time staff members such as gardeners and manuscript copyists.

A large madrasa with a hefty endowment might boast a private collection of manuscripts along with a librarian to oversee it.[10] One such madrasa was the Nāṣiriyya, which played an important role in al-Nuwayrī's personal life and professional career. It served as one of the main spaces of intellectual exchange with his teachers and other scholarly acquaintances, and its library represented a principal resource for the compilation of the *Ultimate Ambition*. In this chapter, I explore the impact of this scholarly milieu upon al-Nuwayrī's intellectual formation, arguing that its cosmopolitan character informed the enormous range of sources that al-Nuwayrī drew upon to compose his work, while also shaping his ecumenical approach to reconciling the contradictions and tensions involved in their combination.

THE SCHOLARLY MILIEU

Al-Nuwayrī came to live in the Nāṣiriyya madrasa shortly after it opened in 1303 and probably remained a resident there until the end of his life, apart from the few years he spent in Syria.[11] This was the first major structure associated with Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, and the first cruciform madrasa in Egypt with a separate lecture hall reserved for each of the four major Sunni law schools (see figures 3.1 and 3.2).[12] The construction of the madrasa and the attached mausoleum (*qubba*) was begun sometime

between 1294 and 1296 by Sultan al-ʿĀdil Kitbugha, who was deposed before it was complete. When al-Nāṣir came to power for the second time in 1298, the Mālikī chief judge Zayn al-Dīn Ibn Makhlūf persuaded him to purchase the property and endow it as an important college of law.

Higher education in the Mamluk Empire was a lucrative business for scholars and administrators with enough clout to secure stipends for themselves and their descendants. No sooner had al-Nāṣir agreed to purchase Kitbugha's madrasa than the new institution became the object of double-dealing and spiteful politicking at the highest levels of government. Al-Nuwayrī provides a behind-the-scenes peek at the triangulation that preceded the madrasa's investiture, in book 5 of the *Ultimate Ambition*:

> The chief judge Zayn al-Dīn had prepared the endowment deed, giving himself control over the school and the mausoleum for the rest of his life, then passing control onto his children and their descendants, and then finally to the [future] Mālikī chief judge. He also stipulated that the teaching in the Mālikī hall would fall to himself and his children . . . This disturbed Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿUbāda, who had been brought into al-Nāṣir's administration as an inspector (*mushārif*) by Zayn al-Dīn. So Ibn ʿUbāda went to the sultan and explained the details of the endowment to him, and said: "The chief judge has done this for himself, his children, and their descendants, and he hasn't left anything for the sultan and his freed slaves (*ʿutaqāʾ*)." He suggested to the sultan that he change the endowment deed and place financial control in the hands of his freedman, the eunuch Shujāʿ al-Dīn ʿAnbar al-Lālā, and after him to other respectable members of the sultan's former slaves, then to the slaves of his father [the late sultan Qalāwūn]. This the sultan did . . . voiding the previous deed and executing the second one.[13]

The official who torpedoed the chief judge's designs on the Nāṣiriyya was the same Ibn ʿUbāda who supported al-Nuwayrī's promotion in the Nāṣirī administration a few years later but then had him flogged for insubordination. When al-Nuwayrī asked him why he circumvented Ibn Makhlūf's plan, Ibn ʿUbāda reportedly responded candidly: "He gave control and teaching privileges to himself and his children after him, and didn't give me a share. Nor did he give me a job, even though I had asked that he make me an inspector as part of the donor's conditions. He was stingy at my expense."[14] Given the bad blood between the two men, al-Nuwayrī's account of this should be treated with care. On the other hand, it may explain the reason for his eventual insubordination, which led to the flogging.[15]

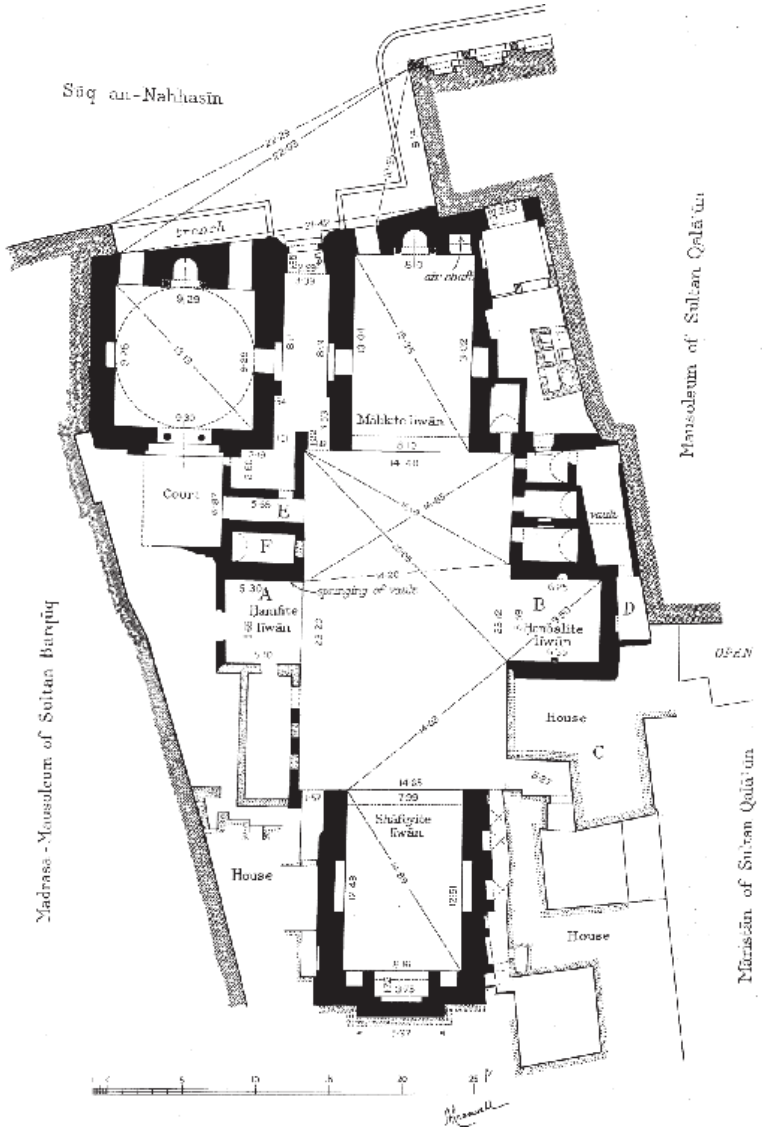


FIGURE 3.1. Ground plan of the Nāṣiriyya madrasa in Cairo (K.A.C. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt* volume 2: Ayyubids and Early Bahrite Mamluks A.D. 1171–1326 by K.A.C. Creswell, fig: 137, inserted between pp. 238 & 239 "The Madrasa-Mausoleum of Sultan an-Nasir Muhammad." [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952–59]).

FIGURE 3.2. Facade of the Nāṣiriyya madrasa in Cairo, with a view of its minaret and portal (photo by Nasser Rabbat, used with permission).

After discussing the politicking behind the establishment of the Nāṣiriyya, al-Nuwayrī provides a summary of its endowment document (*kitāb al-waqf*), which came to light in 1324 after the death of the school's administrator.[16] The document and accompanying commentary provide a detailed description of the Nāṣiriyya's mission, expenditures, funding sources, staff, and

architectural features. Al-Nuwayrī also describes his rationale for including it:

> I thought it necessary to provide a summary of the endowment deed for the school and the mausoleum . . . And what led me to do so in this book —despite the length [of the deed] and its departure from the historical theme—are the similar cases in which other old endowment deeds have been concealed after the pledge to uphold their conditions, and financial supervisors and overseers have traded them between each other and taken control of the endowments and changed their expenditures against the conditions of their donors . . . Secondly, what led me to do this was what happened in this very school from the outset, despite the fact that its donor [i.e., Sultan al-Nāṣir] was alive—may God immortalize his reign—and despite the need to supervise it and appoint chief judges and great scholars, nobles, and jurists to teach in it, there were still many cases of violations against the donor's conditions. The overseer did not fulfill the donor's stipulations, despite the availability of funds well beyond the requirements of the stipulations. This all became apparent after the death of the financial controller—the eunuch Shujāʿ al-Dīn, in the year 724 AH —when the endowment deed emerged. It is possible that the abovementioned controller did not do this willfully after having inspected the conditions, but rather out of disregard and neglect and ignorance, and a lack of scrutiny over that which was entrusted to him.[17]

If the corruption that tainted the Nāṣiriyya's affairs for its first few decades underscores the extent to which formal legal structures were easily circumvented by the strongmen of the Mamluk political and administrative elite, al-Nuwayrī's indignation on behalf of the aggrieved educators indicates that such structures were also taken seriously by the ʿulamāʾ. The sorting out of the Nāṣiriyya's finances was part of a broader movement of educational reform under the sultan. As Mahmood Ibrahim has shown, the madrasas of Syria were audited during this period in order to root out financial abuses.[18] In one case, officials discovered that a Damascene madrasa had 190 jurists on its payroll despite a stipulation in the deed document that it could only employ twenty. When 130 were dismissed as a compromise, the sources report considerable consternation on behalf of the teaching staff. In the case of the Nāṣiriyya, the reform process involved hiring more jurists and doubling their salaries, as stipulated in the original deed. Table 3.1 contains a list of the Nāṣiriyya's expenses.

TABLE 3.1. THE BUDGET OF THE NĀṢIRIYYA MADRASA[19]

MONTHLY EXPENSES	
Stipend for the supervisor (*nāẓir*)	300
Mausoleum's imam	80
Shaykh al-ḥadīth	30
Mausoleum's Quran reciters	25
Public visitors to the mausoleum	500

240	Eight muezzins (two senior, six junior)
38	Two custodians for the mausoleum
16	Three upholsterers[20]
160	Four servants from among the freedmen of al-Nāṣir
30	Mausoleum gatekeeper
N/A	Funds for olive oil, candles, sundries, plates, glasses, cups, etc.
4,000	Professors, teaching assistants, and students[21]
80	Madrasa imam
100	Four custodians for madrasa
30	Librarian
30	Gatekeeper for madrasa
60	Cattle-driver[22]
1,834	Monthly expenses
8,942	Monthly endowment[23]

The descriptions of duties attached to each of the line items paint a picture of the Nāṣiriyya as a bustling intellectual community. A century after al-Nuwayrī lived there, al-Maqrīzī could still describe it as a glorious madrasa with an important history, whose luster was just starting to fade.[24] Students, professors, teaching assistants, and prayer leaders boarded at the school, which was maintained by a sizable custodial staff. The attached mausoleum was a place open to visitation by the public, while the gatekeepers ensured that the halls of the school itself were reserved for daily study. Professors were under strict orders to meet with students and to attend to their requests for clarification in their lessons. The librarian guarded the school's collection of books and was required to make certain that they did not leave the building. The presence of students and teachers from all four schools of law probably made for a stimulating intellectual space, and one that played a role in some of the leading religious controversies of the day.[25]

Madrasas like the Nāṣiriyya were producers and consumers of a range and quantity of books unsurpassed in medieval Islamic history. In his biographical dictionary of fifteenth-century scholars and other notables, the historian Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) recounted a list of over 1,100 books studied in the madrasas of his time, encompassing such disciplines as "grammar, rhetoric, literature, geography, history, philosophy/logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences," in addition to the three major fields of Quran, ḥadīth, and jurisprudence.[26] Al-Nuwayrī does not mention which subjects were taught at the Nāṣiriyya besides law and ḥadīth, but the school's proximity to several other madrasas in the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn neighborhood of Cairo suggests that he would have been exposed to a wide range of subjects.[27] A single population of students and scholars circulated among these institutions, and the teaching of law and the religious sciences was not meaningfully segregated from instruction in other disciplines, such as medicine.[28]

At the same time that he moved into the Nāṣiriyya, al-Nuwayrī was put in charge of the neighboring Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī, a famous hospital built by

Sultan Qalāwūn, the father of al-Nāṣir. It was among the most impressive structures in the empire, containing treatment rooms, educational spaces, laboratories, running water, baths, and a school mosque with a library of medical, theological, and legal texts.[29] Al-Nuwayrī does not provide the full investiture document but describes the hospital's dedication, based on the testimony of someone who had attended it:

> When [the hospital] was finished, the sultan came to see it along with the nobles, judges, and scholars. Someone who witnessed this told me that the sultan called for a goblet of cordial, drank it, and said: "I hereby bequeath this to those of my stature and those beneath me," and he bequeathed it to master and servant, soldier and commander and vizier, old and young, freeborn and slave, man and woman. And he decreed that all patients leaving the hospital receive clothing during their convalescence, and those who died would be shrouded and buried. Physicians, ophthalmologists, surgeons, and bone-setters were appointed to treat the short-sighted, the sick, the wounded, the broken-boned, both men and women. Attendants and custodians were appointed to take care of the patients, cleaning their rooms, washing their clothes, and bathing them, and they were paid well. Beds, carpets, mattresses, mats, pillows, and blankets were produced, with each patient receiving a complete set of bedding. Groups of patients were placed in specialized wards . . . with running water in most of them. And spaces were set aside for preparing food, drink, medicines, pastes and powders . . . There was a place for the head physician to sit and give lectures in medicine which the students would find useful . . . And [the hospital's services] were not limited to the patients residing within it; medicines and food and drink were also provided to the needy living in their homes.[30]

Al-Nuwayrī oversaw the hospital's affairs for four years. This experience helped cultivate his interest in the natural world and those who studied it, which is evident in the zoological and botanical portions of the *Ultimate Ambition*.[31] Departing from his reserved style, books 3 and 4 are peppered with al-Nuwayrī's personal testimonies and contemporary observations about plants and animals. He reports having seen a lion in the Syrian wilderness, elephant tusks in Upper Egypt, and crocodile-fighting buffaloes (whose milk, he says, is creamy and delicious) in the Nile. He recounts different contemporary appellations for many birds, such as the bustard, the goose, and the jay, and praises the donkey as the most popular mode of transportation in contemporary Egypt.

Although his botanical and zoological treatments are indebted to earlier cosmographical works, al-Nuwayrī occasionally departs from their classifications and interposes new species that he has seen in person or come across in the course of his reading.[32] In his discussion of vipers in book 3, he recounts an interchange with the chief physician of the hospital—the famous

doctor and scion of a medical dynasty, Ibn Abī Ḥulayqa[33]—who demonstrated to him the preparation of antivenom in the Bīmāristān's workspace:

> Among the most amazing things I witnessed with respect to vipers was the time when one was sliced up in my presence at al-Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī in Cairo in 706 AH, in order to make the Fārūq theriac (*al-diryāq al-fārūq*).[34] Its head and tail were cut off, it was skinned, its belly cut open, and it was gutted while continuing to tremble (*takhtaliju*). Then it was boiled and its meat came off its bones, and I looked at it and it was still trembling. I was amazed by that and said so to the chief physician, ʿAlam al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqa, and he said: "That's nothing compared to what you will see now. Call for the viper pastilles (*aqrāṣ al-afāʿī*)[35] that were prepared over a year ago." So I did, and they were brought by the quartermaster. They were suspended in honey. The viper meat had been pounded after it was boiled and then ground up with semolina (*samīdh*) and made into pastilles, then placed into honey for over a year. He said to me: "Look at the pastilles," and I did, and lo and behold! They were trembling gently.[36]

Al-Nuwayrī's interest in medicine and his access to medical texts were likely the consequence of his four-year experience overseeing the affairs of the Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī. As Ahmed Ragab has shown, the establishment of this hospital was a cornerstone of Sultan Qalāwūn's strategy to enhance the patronage of the medical sciences in Mamluk Egypt. Ibn al-Mukarram, the sultan's scribe, noted that previous sovereigns had lavished funds upon the instruction of law and the religious sciences through the construction of madrasas, while neglecting medicine and the building of hospitals.[37] Qalāwūn intended to rectify this imbalance. In addition to providing care, the hospital had funds available for a lecturer to introduce students to the various branches of medicine. These lectures seem to have been of a propaedeutic character, providing the foundation necessary for more advanced study.[38] Given the extensive pharmacopeial materials in the *Ultimate Ambition*, it seems likely that al-Nuwayrī might have attended these sessions during his time at the hospital.

The social context of encyclopedic compilation in fourteenth-century Cairo was shaped significantly by institutions like the Nāṣiriyya madrasa and the Bimāristān al-Manṣūrī. Alongside the imperial bureaucracy taken up in chapter 4, the scholarly scene represented one of two milieus in which learned individuals circulated, formed personal and professional bonds, shared knowledge through oral and written transmission, and acquired the archival skills upon which their compilatory work depended. In the case of al-Nuwayrī, the institutions that he oversaw directly influenced his intellectual interests and the sources of knowledge that were available to him. In what follows, I map these sources and explore some of the strategies that al-Nuwayrī used to reconcile the tensions and dissonances brought about by their

combination.

THE SOURCES OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

The *Ultimate Ambition* drew upon a great range of authoritative sources composed over several centuries. With the exception of the treatment of financial secretaryship in §2.5.14 and the extensive swaths of historiographical narrative in its final volumes, the work combined excerpts from a large number of written sources in many disciplines. It is difficult to assemble a complete account of these sources, since it was not al-Nuwayrī's practice to list them consistently, although he was more diligent in this regard than many other Mamluk compilers. His modes of attribution range from complete citation—with the title of the book he is copying from and its author's name—to partial citation, to no citation at all,[39] which is why even some of its closest readers have been confounded in their attempts to reconstruct its author's complete library of sources.[40] However, even a fragmentary picture such as the one I present above tells us a good deal about the texts that were available to al-Nuwayrī and which he deemed worth excerpting.

TABLE 3.2. SOURCES OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*, BOOKS 1, 3, AND 4[41]

Book 1	*Primary source:* al-Waṭwāṭ, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar* *Sources not transmitted by al-Waṭwāṭ:* al-Thaʿālibī, *Fiqh al-lugha*; al-Maydānī, *Amthāl*;[42] al-Shahrastanī, *Kitāb al-milal wa-l-niḥal*; ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Yamānī (epistle transmitted by the author, likely through personal correspondence); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf fī tafsīr mā ishtamala ʿalayhi aḥādīth al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya li-Ibn Hishām*; ʿAlī b. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, untitled book about Persian holidays; al-ʿImād al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-ʿaṣr*; al-Mufaḍḍal b. Salama, *Kitāb al-Fākhir*; Yūsuf b. ʻAbd Allāh b. ʻAbd al-Barr, *al-Ṣalāt al-Qurṭubī*; al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Kitāb al-shifāʾ*; al-Thaʿlabī, *Kashf al-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān*; Ibn Zūlāq, *Faḍāʾil Miṣr*; Ibn Bassām, *al-Dhakhīra fī maḥāsin ahl al-Jazīra*; al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus*, *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*; Ibn Sīnā, source not given; Hippocrates (via Ibn Sīnā?) *Other sources*:[43] Various ḥadīth collections; al-Masʻūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab* (quoted in the *Mabāhij*); al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*; Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīra*; Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī, *al-Gharīb al-Muṣannaf*;[44] Abū Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-ʿaẓma*; Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* (quoted in the *Mabāhij*); al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq ilā ikhtirāq al-āfāq* (quoted in the *Mabāhij*); Ibrāhīm b. Waṣīf Shāh, *Kitāb al-ʿajāʾib al-kabīr* (quoted in the *Mabāhij*); al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Naẓar fī al-tijāra*;[45] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-amṣār*; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*; al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Sind*
Book 3	*Primary source:* al-Waṭwāṭ, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar* *Sources not transmitted by al-Waṭwāṭ:* al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dimyāṭī, *Faḍl al-khayl*; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn* (*Kitāb al-mufrada fī al-adwiya*); Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*; Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamharat nasab Quraysh wa-akhbāruhā*; Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Khaylī, *Kitāb al-furūsiyya wa-ʿilājat al-dawābb*;[46] al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāya*; Sulaymān b. Banīn al-Naḥwī al-Miṣrī, *Ālāt al-jihād wa-adawāt al-ṣināʿāt al-jiyād*; Qāsim b. Thābit, *Kitāb al-dalāʾil*; Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-maʿārif*; Galen (via Ibn Sīnā); Dioscorides (via Ibn Sīnā); Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*; al-ʿImād al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-ʿaṣr;* al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*; al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*; Aflīmūn (Polemon), *Kitāb al-firāsa*; Ibn Ḥalab Rāghib, *Tārīkh*; Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, epistle on

hunting (perhaps transmitted through personal correspondence)[47]
Other sources: al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*; Aristotle (via al-Jāḥiẓ); Ibn Abī al-Ashʿath, *al-Ḥayawān*; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*; various ḥadīth collections (esp. *al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*); al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*; Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*; Ibn Durayd, *al-Maqṣūra*; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-qawl fī al-bighāl*; Usāma b. Munqidh, *Azhār al-anhār*; Ibn Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*; Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*

Book 4
Primary source: al-Waṭwāṭ, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*
Sources not transmitted by al-Waṭwāṭ: Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn* (*Kitāb al-mufrada fī al-adwiya*); Shihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Naṣr al-Shīrāzī, *al-Iḍāḥ fī asrār al-nikāḥ*;[48] al-Thaʿālibī's *Fiqh al-lugha*; al-ʿImād al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-ʿaṣr*; Rufus of Ephesus (via Ibn Sīnā); Galen (via Ibn Sīnā); Hippocrates (via Ibn Sīnā); ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Yamānī, epistle entitled *Anwār al-saʿd wa-nuwwār al-majd fī-ʿl-mufākhara bayn al-narjis wa-l-ward*;[49] ʿAlī b. Sahl al-Ṭabarī, *Firdaws al-ḥikma fī al-ṭibb*; al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt fī asrār al-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*; Abū al-Qāsim al-Zahrāwī, *Kitāb al-Zahrāwī*;[50] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Tamīmī al-Maqdisī, *Jayb al-ʿarūs wa rayḥān al-nufūs*[51]
Other sources: Ibn Waḥshiyya, *Asrār al-qamar*; Al-Kindī, *Aqrābādhīn*;[52] Al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj*; Abu ʿUbayd al-Bakrī's *Masālik wa mamālik*; ʿAlī b. Ẓāfir al-Azdī, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*; al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*; Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Ibn al-Tilmīdh, no title given;[53] al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha wa-sirr al-barāʿa*; al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, *Qalāʾid al-ʿIqyān*; Ibn al-Bayṭār, *al-Jāmiʿ li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa-l-aghdiya*; Abū al-Khayr al-ʿAshshāb, *Kitāb al-nabāt*;[54] al-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*; al-Tamīmī, al-*Murshid*[55]

In a previous chapter, I introduced al-Waṭwāṭ's *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts* and discussed its significance as the basis for the *Ultimate Ambition*'s compositional paradigm. In addition to serving as a structural model, al-Waṭwāṭ's text was also a major source for books 1, 3, and 4 of al-Nuwayrī's work. A comparison of the two texts reveal important differences in the interests of their compilers. In the case of book 1, on heaven and earth, it is evident that al-Nuwayrī edited and adjusted the material he copied from al-Waṭwāṭ in subtle ways, most notably in his treatment of geography. Al-Waṭwāṭ's geographical chapters contain reports about cities, bodies of water, landmasses, and monuments from all over the known world, while the *Ultimate Ambition* focuses on what might be called devotional geography: descriptions of sacred monuments and cities within the Islamic lands.

The reason for this difference in emphasis may have been a function of the political circumstances in which these two authors composed their works. Although they were contemporaries, al-Nuwayrī was several decades younger than al-Waṭwāṭ, decades that saw major historical developments and significant changes to Egypt's political landscape. As Zayde Antrim has shown, geographies composed during the Mamluk period exhibit sharp differences from those composed even a few decades earlier. For example, ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285) was only twenty years younger than the Ayyūbid historian Ibn al-ʿAdīm and had even served the last Ayyūbid prince before moving to Egypt and joining the Mamluk government toward the end of his life. However, Ibn Shaddād's descriptions of Syria in his geographical work *Precious Things of Moment in the Account of the Princes of Syria and*

the Jazīra (*al-Aʿlāq al-khaṭīra fī dhikr umarāʾ al-Shām wa-l-Jazīra)* represent a major rupture with the discourse of place that is found among earlier authors like Ibn al-ʿAdīm. He conceived of spatial parameters at the regional, rather than local, level, combining nostalgia for a specific place with political loyalty to the sultan, and balanced his discussion of topography with political history. Al-Nuwayrī's primary interest in the territories and cities that were part of the Mamluk Empire—many of which he visited in his capacity as a representative of the imperial government—along with his addition of copious amounts of political history in his fifth book, may also be explained by these changing political circumstances.[56]

In the third book, on animals, al-Nuwayrī's primary source is again *Delightful Concepts*. Much of the poetry he transmits had been previously curated by al-Waṭwāṭ, and the general compositional paradigm is identical: both authors begin a chapter on an animal by relating various reports about its appearance and general behavior from different authorities and follow it with a subchapter on literary descriptions tending toward the epigrammatic. Much of this zoological material has a recherché, quotable quality: dog urine removes warts and its blood is effective against the poison of Armenian arrows; female hyenas are necrophilic grave robbers; snakes love watermelon, mustard, and alcohol.[57]

Al-Nuwayrī seems to revel in the mix of salacious and fantastical detail but is not opposed to challenging reports on the basis of personal experience. For instance, he disagrees with al-Jāḥiẓ on the duration of a pig's gestation period but follows his opinion on the lineage of the giraffe, offering a personal testimony to confirm it. In his *Book of Animals,* al-Jāḥiẓ had argued against the writers of antiquity who suggested that the giraffe was a crossbreed of many species; his proof was that the giraffe gave birth to like offspring. In his chapter on the giraffe, al-Nuwayrī concurs and said that he witnessed a giraffe himself in Cairo that gave birth to a baby giraffe, who remained alive at the time of his writing.[58] These personal interventions are especially plentiful in book 3, as I mentioned earlier in my discussion of al-Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī, and attest to al-Nuwayrī's interest in animals.

The fourth book of the *Ultimate Ambition*—on flowers, trees, mannas, vegetables, fruits, gum resins, and the like—exhibits further interesting divergences from al-Waṭwāṭ's text. The species treated and the method of their arrangement is very similar,[59] but al-Nuwayrī's primary focus is on the medical and occult properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of plants, which he draws from the same text that he relied upon in book 3, the *Book of Simple Drugs* (part of Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine*). *Delightful Concepts* does not transmit anything from Ibn Sīnā, and al-Waṭwāṭ is generally more interested in agriculture than medicine. His main sources in this regard are two books by Ibn Waḥshiyya, *The Nabataean Agriculture* (*al-Filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya*) and *The Moon's Secrets* (*Asrār al-qamar*) as well as Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Baṣṣāl's *Book of Agriculture* (*Kitāb al-filāḥa*).[60] Al-Nuwayrī reproduces most of the quotations

from *The Moon's Secrets*, but does not bother with the material from *The Nabataean Agriculture*.[61] A final difference between the two works is that the delightful last section of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s book 4 dealing with aromatics and aphrodisiacs does not appear in al-Waṭwāṭ's text at all; al-Nuwayrī copied it from a work entitled *The Bride's Purse* (*Jayb al-ʿarūs*) by one al-Tamīmī, which is no longer extant. Table 3.2 contains an overview of sources for books 1, 3, and 4, and gives a sense of the degree of generic heterogeneity encompassed therein.

TABLE 3.3. MAJOR SOURCES FOR THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*, BOOK 2

§SOURCE NOTES
§2.1 Tha ālibī, *Fiqh al-lugha*; al-Maydānī, *al-Amthāl*; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-hawā*; Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*; al-Jawwānī al-Nassāba, *al-Muqaddima*
§2.2 Maydānī, *al-Amthāl* (§2.2.1)
§2.3 ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (§2.3.1–§2.3.3); Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *al-Tadhkira*; Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (§2.3.6); Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *Kitāb al-samāʿ*; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*
§2.4 Ḥamdūn, *al-Tadhkira*
§2.5 ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥalīmī al-Jurjānī, *al-Minhāj* (§2.5.1, §2.5.10–§2.5.13); Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (§2.5.2, §2.5.5–§2.5.8, §2.5.10, §2.5.14); Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *al-Adab al-kabīr* (§2.5.3–§2.5.4, §2.5.9); Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Rasāʾil Ibn Muqaffaʿ* (§2.5.3–§2.5.4); ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha* (§2.5.4); Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* (§2.5.5–§2.5.8, §2.5.10); al-Māwardī, *Adab al-dīn wa-l-dunyā* (§2.5.5–§2.5.8); al-Māwardī, *Qawānīn al-wizāra wa-siyāsat al-mulk* (§2.5.9); al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* (§2.5.10–§2.5.13); Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa-l-siyāsa* (§2.5.10); al-Thaʿālibī, *Fiqh al-lugha*; Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (§2.5.10); Unknown author, *Khazāʾin al-silāḥ* (§2.5.10); ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Yamānī, epistle on the subject of weapons (§2.5.10, requested through personal correspondence in the year 707 AH); Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ, *Taḥrīr al-taḥbīr* (§2.5.14); Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-āthār* (§2.5.14); al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-ādāb* (§2.5.14); Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, *Ḥusn al-tawassul ilā ṣināʿat al-tarassul* (§2.5.14); al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍḍād* (§2.5.14); Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Thalāth Rasāʾil* (§2.5.14); al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* (§2.5.14); ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. Saʿīd al-Azdī, *Kitāb al-muʾtalif wa-l-mukhtalif* (§2.5.14)

The *Ultimate Ambition*'s sources in books 1, 3, and 4 are striking for their topical diversity. Alongside adab collections and poetic anthologies are geographical works, exegetical commentaries, heresiographies, ḥadīth collections, dispensatories, lexicographical treatises, chronicles, and specialized monographs on a wide array of subjects. While al-Waṭwāṭ's *Delightful Concepts* provided the skeleton of books 1, 3, and 4 along with most of their poetry, al-Nuwayrī felt free to excise a lot of material that did not interest him and replace it with copious borrowings from other authoritative works, particularly Ibn Sīnā's *Book of Simple Drugs* and al-Thaʿālibī's *Law of the Lexicon* (*Fiqh al-lugha*), a lexicographical compilation.

Sorting out the sources for the rest of the *Ultimate Ambition* is more difficult, precisely because al-Nuwayrī does not rely on a single text as a model. Scholarly interest in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s historical materials has

attracted attention to the question of book 5's dependence on earlier chronicles, particularly those that al-Nuwayrī drew upon in composing the enormous final chapter of the work (§5.5.12). Here, we have a rough idea of some of the texts that he used—which included several works by contemporaries such as Baybars al-Manṣūrī's (d. 725/1325) *The Quintessence of Thought on Islamic History* (*Zubdat al-fikra fī taʾrīkh al-hijra),* Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī's (d. 739/1338) *Events of Time* (*Ḥawādith al-zamān)*, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī's (d. 726/1326) *Supplement to the Mirror of Time* (*Dhayl Mirʾāt al-zamān)*, and ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Birzālī's (d. 739/1339) *The Preferred* (*al-Muqtafā)*—but a great deal of work remains if we are to understand how he adjusted and reworked his sources.[62]

The sources for book 2 are even more challenging to map than those of book 5, given the diversity of topics it embraces. What is evident from my exploratory attempt to do so is that although al-Nuwayrī did not rely on a single text like *Delightful Concepts* in elaborating the structure of this second book, he did typically depend on one or two major sources in each section or chapter, supplementing his borrowings with shorter excerpts from literary compendia such as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *Unique Necklace,* al-Ḥuṣrī's *Flower of Literary Arts*, and Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī's *Register of Motifs* (*Dīwān al-maʿānī*). One might make the tentative case that book 2 is essentially a concatenation of large excerpts from a collection of about two dozen major sources.[63]

ADAB AND ANTIQUARIANISM

When surveying al-Nuwayrī's sources, a familiar question arises. How much of this, strictly speaking, is adab?[64] My treatment of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s structure in the previous chapter concluded that the work represented an expansion of the horizons of adab beyond their Abbasid coordinates. And yet, as we've seen here, a great deal of the older corpus of material anthologized in ninth- and tenth-century adab texts is a mainstay of al-Nuwayrī's work. While there are several Mamluk-era texts among his sources, there is also an enormous amount of material that is centuries old, originating in the works of al-Jāḥiẓ, Ibn Qutayba, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, Ibn Waḥshiyya, al-Masʿūdī, al-Māwardī, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, and others. Moreover, in the poetry he quotes, al-Nuwayrī betrays a decided bias towards the luminaries of the Abbasid period rather than the poets of his own age.

How to make sense of al-Nuwayrī's anthological choices? Like the problem of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s generic identity, it is a mistake to collapse the question of sources to a single motive. Rather, I would propose a catalog of motives. In the first instance, the book draws from a range of classical sources containing materials that could be described as possessing some kind of technical utility to various professional types: the chancery scribe, the financial scribe, the physician, the pharmacist, the copyist, the vizier, the

jurist, the historiographer. One thinks here of the subchapters on the chancery and the world of financial administration;[65] the epistles composed by figures such as al-Ḥalabī and other prose stylists;[66] selections from the literature on governance;[67] the medical recipes contained in book 4; and the discussions of calligraphy and manuscript copying at the end of book 2.[68]

Just as important as these materials meant to instruct, however, are the copious selections intended to delight. How else to interpret the enormous excerpts from Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Book of Songs* and its biographies of famous singers;[69] amusing parables and stories from *Kalīla wa-dimna*;[70] reports about which of the Prophet Muḥammad's companions had the best sense of humor;[71] or discussions of Bedouin superstitions like physiognomy and ornithomancy?[72] Very little of this material was directly relevant to anyone's professional duties, and yet it dominates much of the nonhistorical portions of the *Ultimate Ambition*.

A third capacious category of contents, which overlaps substantially with the previous two and in some ways combines them, is what we might describe as material deemed pedagogically salient to the intellectual and cultural habitus of the Mamluk scholarly elite. To put it in a simpler way, this material defined their own adab. As discussed in chapter 1, the place of adab in scholarly culture underwent a significant change beginning in the twelveth and thirteenth centuries. Following the end of the Ḥamdānid period (9th–10th c.) and the beginnings of a "Sunni revival" under the Saljuq rulers, adab (both as literature and as a cultural ideal) waned in popularity. In this environment, most scholars turned to nonliterary pursuits to distinguish themselves and to find employment in the madrasas established by governors and rich notables.[73] During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, however, poetry regained its place of central importance.[74] In addition to classical poetry, this era also witnessed the rise in popularity of folk poetic forms (such as the *muwashshaḥ, dūbayt,* and *zajal*), the emergence of the shadow play, the increase in religious poetry, and a great appreciation for epistolography and *maqāmāt*. Purveyors of popular poetry included not only the middle strata of society, what Margaret Larkin has called a "petite bourgeoisie" (craftsmen, shopkeepers, etc.), but also, significantly, members of the religious establishment.[75] We find figures such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī composing poetry in addition to judges and exegetes like Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd and Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī. There developed a craze among the ʿulamāʾ for anthologizing literature, which served an important sociological function within the intellectual circles of medieval Cairo and Damascus. Their poetry was not composed for political patrons but rather for their fellow scholars, a state of affairs that Bauer characterizes as "mainly a bourgeois phenomenon." While the absence of a system of court patronage meant that most poets had to make their living as scholars or secretaries, "a flourishing book market in the Mamluk period . . . provided a more secure income than patronage for an *adīb*."[76]

When al-Nuwayrī wrote in his preface about the importance of cultivating one's eloquence and erudition through the study of adab, what he had in mind was something perhaps not so different from what today's proponents of liberal arts education champion: the exposure to a certain worldview, an intellectual habitus, a cultural vocabulary. A considerable amount of the material that al-Nuwayrī deemed to be worth including in the *Ultimate Ambition* was reflective of the valorization of highly informed, intertextual, recherché engagements with the Arabic literary heritage.

In this regard, a considerable proportion of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s contents could rightly be called "antiquarian," a quality that scholars have attributed to Mamluk literature as a whole. Robert Irwin writes: "Like all true renaissances, it had a backward-looking flavor and it harked back to the manners and literary productions of eighth- and ninth-century Abbasid Iraq . . . The poets of Cairo and Damascus studied the old Baghdadi prescriptions on how to court beautiful slave girls, cultivate male friendships, dress elegantly, and perfume themselves."[77] While some have dismissed this preoccupation with classical models typical of a derivative "Alexandrian" age, Everett Rowson has shown how literary influence was less a source of anxiety as one of delight: "For Mamluk writers, one is tempted to say, intertextuality was what literature is all about; and the more of a past one has to deal with, the more one can glory in reproducing, ringing changes on, and playing with that past, to the ongoing enrichment of the Arabic literary tradition."[78]

The interest in classical models and sources may also have been connected to the role that poetry played as a source of personal distinction in an increasingly crowded literary scene. Because the period witnessed a rise of (mainly vernacular) literary production among social classes—merchants, soldiers, artisans—in which it had not previously enjoyed purchase, the absence of formal requirements for entry to the scholarly class meant that the ability to compose classical poetry came to represent "one of the main criteria that the high-brow ulama used to distinguish themselves from lesser-educated aspirants," setting apart the learned scholar from the student who might have memorized a textbook or two on ḥadīth.[79]

This sociological reading fits al-Nuwayrī's classicizing tastes quite well. Recalling the portrait of him sketched out in chapter 1 as someone on the outside looking in—a man who came to adab late in life and was not known for his own poetic production—it is not suprising that he was a little bit stuffy in his tastes, as parvenus sometimes are. His choice of authoritative texts from the Abbasid era reflects the fact that the *Ultimate Ambition* was partly a vehicle for its author's self-edification, an archive of excerpts from his readings across the Islamic intellectual tradition. Was that archive, however, merely a heap of facts? Or can we trace we trace some attempt on al-Nuwayrī's part to synthesize the diverse sources he drew upon?

In his discussion of the events of the year 613/1216 in book 5 of the *Ultimate Ambition*, al-Nuwayrī relates a story about the dismissal of the Shāfiʿī chief judge ʿImād al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAlī b. ʿAlī al-Sukkarī from his post, as a result of his refusal to approve the appointment of a certain official to the financial supervision of a particular madrasa.[80] The sultan at the time, al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb, was angered by the chief judge's impertinence, and so he dismissed him from the chief judgeship as well as from his position as head preacher at the al-Ḥākim Mosque in Cairo. Such reports on the hirings and firings of state officials are abundant in the final volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition*, and this particular narrative is unremarkable except for a curious interjection by al-Nuwayrī towards the end.

After naming the officials who replaced the judge, he writes: "This was the apparent reason (*al-sabab al-ẓāhir lil-nās*) for the dismissal of the judge ʿImād al-Dīn Ibn al-Sukkarī. As for the true and hidden reason (*al-sabab al-bāṭin*), it was told to me by my father . . . who heard it from his grandfather Zakī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Dāyim and others." The ensuing story begins by introducing a Sufi shaykh and jurist named Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUqaylī who had immigrated from the Maghrib to al-Nuwayrī's ancestral village of al-Nuwayra, where he became a notable of sorts. Al-Nuwayrī's great-grandfather Zakī al-Dīn was one of the shaykh's most devoted followers and attendants, with whom he developed a special bond.[81] Due to his ethical reputation and social position, Raḍī al-Dīn was made the representative of the chief judge ʿImād al-Dīn Ibn al-Sukkarī in al-Nuwayra, where he was responsible for settling legal disputes, such as the following:

> It so happened that two men challenged each other over the ownership of a cow. So one of them wrote up an official record certifying that the cow was his, and a group of witnesses testified to its authenticity. They took their testimony to the jurist [the Sufi shaykh Raḍī al-Dīn], and all that remained was to hand the cow over to the man with the record of ownership. The jurist studied the cow carefully, peering at it. The man with the document asked him for his ruling, and whether or not he would award him the cow. Raḍī al-Dīn responded: "How can I give her to you, when she tells me that she belongs to your opponent and that your record is forged?" So he gave her to his opponent, and the man who had presented the [false] evidence confessed to the truth of what the shaykh Raḍī al-Dīn had said about the cow, and he repented.
>
> When the news of this event reached the judge ʿImād al-Dīn, he wrote to the shaykh Raḍī al-Dīn saying: "In this case, you should have ruled according to the letter of the law and awarded the cow to the one who provided evidence." So, he dismissed the shaykh from his post as his representative. When the news of his dismissal reached him, [the shaykh] said to those around him: "Bear witness to the fact that I have hereby dismissed *him*, and his descendants as well!" [Accordingly, ʿImad al-Dīn]

was dismissed within the hour.[82]

This story, al-Nuwayrī concludes, is one that he does not doubt and is well known to many people.[83] What to make of it? From a modern perspective, al-Nuwayrī's comments seem to give him away as a naïve medieval, gullible enough to believe that a chief judge's dismissal was the product of a provincial shaykh's spooky Sufi mind trick. On the other hand, the story is a revealing instance of al-Nuwayrī's method of working with contradictory truth claims in the *Ultimate Ambition*. What is perhaps most remarkable about it is not that he found the story told by his great-grandfather more compelling than the official narrative, but rather that he stated this opinion so unequivocally at the end of the episode. In most cases where he courts a range of contradictory views on an issue—and there are thousands of such cases in the *Ultimate Ambition*—al-Nuwayrī is far more circumspect about his views. His epistemological outlook is generally ecumenical, marked by charity rather than dogmatism. The skepticism on display in the anecdote about the Sufi shaykh is not a side of al-Nuwayrī's personality that we often see. A more typical application of his ecumenical method may be found in book 5, where al-Nuwayrī devotes a brief discussion to the appearance of a "wondrous beast" in the Nile, in the year 1303:

> In this year, a strange beast appeared in the Nile. It is the animal known as the hippopotamus, and it comes onto the land to eat clover and then returns to the river. On Thursday the 4th of Jumādā II 702 AH (January 24, 1303 CE), it was hunted in the Delta area of al-Manūfiyya.
>
> Its qualities are the following: the color of the hippopotamus is similar to the water buffalo. It is hairless and has ears like a camel. Its vagina is like that of a she-camel, which it covers with a tail that is about a hand-span and a half in length, and looks like a fish's tail. Its neck is as thick as a large stuffed sack and its mouth as wide as a bow for carding cotton. It has four tusks, each of which is less than a hand-span in length and is two fingers wide. Inside its mouth there are twenty-eight molars, incisors, and other teeth in the shape of carved chess pawns. The height of its belly from the ground is about a cubit, and the skin of its legs—between the knees and the hooves—resembles the wrinkled yellow belly of a serpent. Its hoof is about as wide as a plate with four nails like a camel's, and the width of its back is about two and a half cubits in length. Its total length, from mouth to tail, is fifteen feet.
>
> Three stomachs were found in its gut and its flesh was red and oily like that of a fish. Its hide was four fingers' thick; no sword could slice through it. When the animal was hunted, it was skinned and its hide was brought to me when I was with the sultan in the Citadel of the Mountain. Five camels had to share the burden of carrying the hide because of its great weight. A single camel could not carry it for more than an hour at a time. When the hide was brought before the sultan, it was stuffed with

straw and placed on its feet.

This animal had not previously been seen in the Nile in Egypt, but rather dwelled in the lands of the Nūba. The Nubians would make whips out of its hide with which to drive their camels. These are black whips which, when dipped in oil, are nearly impossible to cut. And God knows best.[84]

This description of the hunted hippopotamus, which al-Nuwayrī witnessed himself alongside Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, is of a piece with the style of exposition that one encounters in the historical portion of the *Ultimate Ambition*. Al-Nuwayrī was a careful observer and chronicler of his contemporary surroundings: his accounts of political events, administrative appointments, obituaries, notices of ecological catastrophes, and other miscellaneous happenings in the day-to-day life of the empire have long been valued for their historiographical content. As we saw in chapter 2, al-Nuwayrī's fastidiousness and his system of cross-referencing led him to keep this historical content separate from the rest of the work, even when the subject matter was related. Along these lines, in the zoological volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition* (book 3), one finds a dedicated treatment of the qualities of the hippopotamus:

It has a very large body and the shape of a horse, except that its face is wider, and has cloven hoofs like a cow. Its tail is like a pig's, and its voice sounds like a horse's. The hippopotamus is only found in the Nile.

The hippopotamus comes out of the water onto the land and grazes upon crops. When it does so, it does not begin eating from the edge [closest to the river], but rather crosses a section containing the amount of food that it wants to eat and begins eating there, so that its face remains pointed toward the river.

The hippopotamus kills the crocodile and dominates it. When Egyptians see the tracks of its hooves on land, they interpret this as a good omen that the Nile will overflow and the land will be fertile. In the year 702 AH (1303 CE), a hippo came out onto the land in Giza and ranged far from the river, so it was trapped and killed.[85]

These two accounts of the hippopotamus in two different places within the *Ultimate Ambition*, though apparently similar, in fact describe different animals. The historical account depicts a real hippopotamus, whose physiological dimensions and qualities are summarized on the basis of personal witness. The real hippopotamus has a three-chambered stomach, a four-toed hoof, a tail that resembles that of a fish, wrinkled skin, and about three dozen teeth. The second animal is a different creature altogether: a literary hippopotamus composed of features drawn from zoological lore. Its reputation for dominating the crocodile and eating its way toward the river appears in al-Jāḥiẓ's *Book of Animals*. As per Aristotle, the literary

hippopotamus has the cloven hooves of a cow, the tail of a pig, and the neigh of a horse. Unlike the real hippopotamus—which, to al-Nuwayrī's knowledge, had not been sighted in Egypt in recent memory—the literary hippopotamus was a denizen of the Nile whose appearance was regarded by Egyptians as a good omen.

Why offer two different descriptions of the hippopotamus in the same work? Or, to put the question more generally: why transmit one anecdote so clearly at odds with another anecdote on the same subject? One way to read al-Nuwayrī's interest in the literary hippopotamus is to assume that he was burdened by the weight of tradition and could not help but to transmit this material. An alternative reading might be to suggest that the older reports still held the sort of cultural cachet that an aspiring litterateur was keen to exhibit. Given what said earlier about the salience of encyclopedic erudition within the world of Mamluk letters, there is merit in this interpretation. However, I would like to propose a further reading.

Bearing in mind the structure of the *Ultimate Ambition,* it may be argued that the category of classical adab represented for al-Nuwayrī not just a quarry of quotable materials but a source of paradigmatic knowledge about the world, the truth of which could not always be measured in terms of its correspondence-value to reality. History, on the other hand, was not only a different literary genre, but also a different knowledge practice, an alternative way to address oneself toward the world. One way to think about the differences between these two discourses is to look to the history of Islamic geography and map-making. Karen Pinto has argued in a recent work that the thousands of cartographic images that proliferated in the Islamic world beginning in the thirteenth century

> did not strive for mimesis (imitation of the real world). They did not show irregular coastlines even though some of the geographers whose work includes these maps openly acknowledge that the landmasses and their coastlines are uneven. They present instead a deliberately schematic layout of the world and the regions under Islamic control . . . Scholars of Islamic science and geography often ignore and belittle these maps on the grounds that they are not mimetically accurate representations of the world. What these scholars miss is that these schematic, geometric, and often symmetrical images of the world are iconographic representations —"carto-ideographs"—of how medieval Muslim caratographic artists and their patrons perceived their world and chose to represent and disseminate this perception.[86]

This distinction between the mimetic and schematic modes helps make sense of the two depictions of the hippopotamus in the *Ultimate Ambition*, and, more broadly, of the differences between adab and history that become evident through the attempt to combine them within a single totalizing compendium. Although al-Nuwayrī was committed to the notion that history

was a part of adab, he evidently did not see his role as an arbiter of contradiction between the claims of his authorities and those drawn from personal experience. This is not because he could not conceive of contradiction per se—as the story about the Sufi and the cow makes clear—but because he held that contradiction between two independent domains of knowledge such as zoological lore and historiography was not justification enough to consign one set of these reports to oblivion.

Let us consider another example: the extensive larding of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s botanical chapters (inherited mostly from al-Waṭwāṭ's *Delightful Concepts*) with quotes from two very different sources. For remedies rooted in Galenic humoral medicine, al-Nuwayrī turns to Ibn Sīnā's *Book of Simple Drugs*. Alongside this material are copious borrowings from the esoteric writings of Ibn Waḥshiyya (d. 318/930–31), in particular his magical-agronomical text, *The Moon's Secrets*.[87] The quotes from Ibn Waḥshiyya provide the reader with procedures for growing vegetables using a variety of strange ingredients:

> If you would like to grow cabbage, take four goat hooves and soak them in lard three times, then put them in the ground. Cover them with the hair from a billy goat's beard, then bury everything in sand and throw some soil on top. Cabbage will grow from it.[88] . . . If you take the horns of a boar and slather them with oil, and place a piece of camel dung on each end of the two horns and bury them in the ground, from that will grow good sweet carrots.[89] . . . If you would like pistachios, take a goat's kidney, slit it open and bury a bone from a peacock's spine inside it. Then sprinkle some fumewort over it and put it in the ground. After twenty-seven days, a pistachio tree will grow from it.[90]

It seems unlikely that al-Nuwayrī could have believed that the cabbage, carrots, and pistachios he purchased in the markets of Cairo were grown in the countryside using goat horns, camel dung, and peacock bones. As library-bound as he may have been toward the end of his life, al-Nuwayrī had grown up in a rural setting and had also spent a great deal of time among farmers during his career as a financial inspector. Other sections of the *Ultimate Ambition* contain detailed information about agricultural practices in Syria and the traditions of sugarcane farming in the environs of Qūṣ, the place of his childhood.[91] What, then, was the purpose of transmitting such bizarre material from Ibn Waḥshiyya? Some insight can be found in the preface to book 4:

> This book covers one of the two kinds of growing things, the partner of the animal kind. In treating this subject, we do not intend to exhaust it or to present its beneficial properties in complete detail, or to encompass it in its entirety. Nor did we set out to achieve this, plunging into such torrents and crossing such perilous territory. That is for several reasons—among them a lack of ability and time—but also because so many have failed at

encompassing this subject in the past, including philosophers and sages, famous physicians, desert-dwellers and town-dwellers, and those who assiduously watch over their plants from the rising of the first rain-foreboding star to the arrival of the morning rain-clouds.

Each one of these revealed something that the rest did not, and observed something that no one else imagined. The Turkoman knew something that the Bedouin did not, and the mountaineer knew something that the Nabatean did not. The sages wrote long books on this subject, revealing every hidden benefit and characteristic among the useful and harmful properties of plants. Their works grew numerous and famous and despite all of this, they were not able to contain the subject, perhaps only treating a small portion of it. My intention in presenting it has been to relate literary descriptions by the poets and literary epistles by the eloquent litterateurs, because that is what the attendant of literary gatherings is in need of and depends upon. The scribe benefits from it in his secretaryship, and the epistle-writer's means of effective communication are thus broadened.

This is the kind of material that we have presented here, and if we've gone beyond this in certain places, departing from our principal, descriptive, interests by recounting some beneficial and harmful aspects of plants, their cooling and warming natures . . . their generation and origins, their vile and praiseworthy aspects, these additions are all by way of digression and not out of faithfulness to the original purpose.[92]

The principle that guides al-Nuwayrī's method of selection in book 4 is not so different from the well-known apothegm associated with Pliny the Elder, "There is no book so bad that some good cannot be got from it," discussed in chapter 1.[93] As Ann Blair has shown, this maxim and variants upon it appears in the works of a range of Renaissance encyclopedists, for whom "Pliny was the model encyclopedist . . . and his license to read and learn from every possible source was invoked by various authors engaged in large scale collecting."[94] Al-Nuwayrī justified his wide range of sources using a similar logic, suggesting that even Ibn Sīnā, whom al-Nuwayrī venerates and always refers to as "the Grand Shaykh" (*al-shaykh al-raʾīs*)—a common enough epithet but one that he did not copy from al-Waṭwāṭ's *Delightful Concepts*—did not have a monopoly on the knowledge of plants, and one could only benefit from reading him alongside the writings of an Ibn Waḥshiyya.

As an ecumenical compiler concerned with gathering together different views on a given topic, al-Nuwayrī's instincts were to defer judgment on a point of fact or opinion to his authorities, particularly in the areas in which he considered himself to be a student. This aspect of his method may have been cultivated by an education in ḥadīth, which, as I discuss in chapter 5, provided al-Nuwayrī with a framework for documenting multiple chains of authority.

This experience may also have informed his epistemological outlook, predisposing him toward a big-tent approach to the transmission of authoritative opinions. It is especially apparent in chapters dealing with legal matters, such as the diverse rulings on the punishment for homosexuality and the consumption of wine. In both cases, al-Nuwayrī surveys a range of authorities from the earliest period of Islam through the later intellectual tradition, considering arguments for and against the positions held by rival legal and theological camps. In his chapters on the permissibility of singing and playing music (§2.3.6.2–§2.3.6.4), he draws upon works by Abū l-Faḍl Ibn al-Qaysarānī, al-Ghazālī, and Abū Ḥatim (author of the *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ*), presenting an extended discussion of the various ḥadīths relevant to this subject, including some contradictory ones deemed "sound" (*ṣaḥīḥ*) by the canonical collections, as well as some weak or possibly forged ḥadīths.[95]

Understanding how these evidentiary standards may have impacted the methodology of other Mamluk-era encyclopedists and historiographers—many of whom were thoroughly steeped in the study of ḥadīth—awaits further scholarship on the epistemological dimensions of ḥadīth studies.[96] It certainly should not be assumed that all encyclopedists shared al-Nuwayrī's methods. In fact, his approach can be distinguished from that of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, whose twenty-seven-volume historical-geographical summa, *The Routes of Insight into the Civilized Realms*, displays a very different attitude toward the problems of textual abundance that Ibn Khaldūn decried. Ibn Faḍl Allāh writes in his preface:

> Having consulted all of the books written about the states and contents of the terrestrial climes, I did not find any that scrutinized their conditions or depicted them accurately, for most of these books only contain old reports about the conditions of long-gone kings, extinct civilizations, and customs (*muṣṭalaḥāt*) that have vanished along with their peoples. There not much point in simply recounting them. The best statement is the truest one, and people resemble their own times more than they resemble their ancestors (*al-nās bi-zamānihim ashbahu minhum bi-ābāʾihim*).[97]

Ibn Faḍl Allāh's view of the discipline in which he was writing could not have been more different from al-Nuwayrī's. While the latter cast himself, in the preface to the *Ultimate Ambition*, in the role of one who "followed the traces of those excellent ones before me, and pursued their way, and connected my rope to theirs," Ibn Faḍl Allāh saw himself as purging the geographical tradition of outdated knowledge and hidebound precedents. He argues further in his preface: "I have only transmitted knowledge from the most trustworthy people, those who were meticulous and detailed in [their explanations of] what they saw, and authentic in their transmissions. And I have tried to ask as many questions as I could about each realm, so as to save myself from the neglect of the careless, and the wild imaginings of the ignorant, and the errors of corrupted minds." Similarly, al-Qalqashandī, who

in his preface to *Dawn for the Night-Blind* surveyed the many works in the scribal tradition inaugurated by Ibn Qutayba's *The Secretary's Art*, found them badly in need of an update:

> There is no comprehensive book among them that brings together [secretaryship's] objectives and sources. Most of the books written on this subject and the compositions circulating between its masters do not depart from the science of eloquence that it depends upon, or the elegant phrases that scribes have valued, or some aspect of a practice that has [since] been rejected, its model changed and abolished. The imitator of past scribes will not gain from looking into it, nor will the uninformed scribe be served by it in future instances[98] . . . The imitator (*muqallid*) is not characterized by independent thinking (*ijtihād*). What a difference between he who knows a ruling based upon evidence and he who is inflexible in his imitation with [the confidence of] absolute certainty.[99]

Styling himself as someone who would rid his discipline of archaic knowledge, al-Qalqashandī may have been following Ibn Faḍl Allāh quite explicitly, as one of the works that he had set out to surpass was the latter's own secretarial manual, *The Explanation of Noble Protocols* (*al-Taʿrīf fī l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf*). Although al-Qalqashandī revered Ibn Faḍl Allāh and his *Explanation*, he identified many gaps in it that *Dawn for the Night-Blind* was intended to fill. Both men, however, brought to their compilatory method a privileging of contemporary knowledge over historical authority. In chapter 4, I will consider this focus on the contemporary that comes across strongly in the works of al-Qalqashandī and Ibn Faḍl Allāh, but which may also be traced in al-Nuwayrī's treatments of the imperial administration. As we will see, the parts of the *Ultimate Ambition* that most resemble the later works are concerned above all with the world of Mamluk officialdom.

CONCLUSION

In the fifteenth century, a small Cairene madrasa named the Jawhariyya was known for being the home of a magical pearl and a talismanic bowl inscribed with Quranic verses, which were said to relieve ailments associated with the urinary tract. Locals would visit the school to place the pearl in the bowl with some water, remove it, and then drink the water to cure themselves. While the use of magical pearls was not new in Near Eastern medical traditions, Jonathan Berkey has proposed that the example of the Jawhariyya is interesting because of "the close spatial proximity of cultural processes and artefacts which, at first glance, seem to be so different." As a madrasa, the Jawhariyya was committed to the teaching of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and other classical disciplines that constituted the framework of scholastic orthodoxy. On the other hand, the school was also associated with "a

medicinal cure clearly drawn from the deep well of folk memory, a cure with only the thinnest Islamic veneer, in the form of those inscribed Qurʾānic verses, which barely conceals its pre-Islamic origin."[100]

The scholarly institutions that al-Nuwayrī lived in and oversaw during his career were centers of a similarly complex and creative range of intellectual discourses and values. The Nāṣiriyya madrasa taught the four major rites of Sunni Islamic law and shared an exterior wall with the Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī, where students attended lectures on medicine by the chief physician who, in his spare time, oversaw the suspension of trembling viper pastilles in honey. The holdings of the Nāṣiriyya's library and those of the broader collegiate cluster to which it belonged were characterized by the sort of diversity and plurality that Konrad Hirschler has uncovered in his study of the Ashrafiyya library in Damascus, where the profane rubbed up against the sacred and the solemn jostled for space with the obscene.[101]

In this chapter, I have read the *Ultimate Ambition* as a bookish reflection of such spaces, playing host to a vibrant display of what Shahab Ahmed has termed "Con-Text": "the full encyclopaedia of epistemologies, interpretations, identities, persons and places, structures of authority, textualities and intertextualities, motifs, symbols, values, meaningful questions and meaningful answers."[102] Like other Mamluk encyclopedic texts, al-Nuwayrī's work dramatizes the complexity of navigating this hegemonic intellectual patrimony, and offers us a laboratory within which to test a variety of interpretive approaches for studying the qualities and discursive modes of this period's literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENCYCLOPEDISM AND EMPIRE

SCHOLARS AND BUREAUCRATS

One evening in the year 1306, a meeting took place in a dormitory room at the Nāṣiriyya madrasa in Cairo. Present at the meeting was the judge Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAdlān and a student named ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAynūsī, along with a young Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, who was living at the Nāṣiriyya at the time and serving as a financial manager. As al-Nuwayrī describes the meeting, which took place in his own room at the college, "the student ʿAbd al-Raḥmān came to us with a legal opinion written by Ibn Taymiyya," the famous Syrian theologian.[1] In bringing the *fatwa* to the attention of the judge Ibn ʿAdlān, the student did not intend to impugn Ibn Taymiyya's reputation, "but rather to spread the word of his virtue."[2] Ibn ʿAdlān took the document offered by the student, and began to read:

> In the name of God the Beneficent, the Merciful. What do the esteemed jurists clearly state—may God be pleased with them all—with regard to what a human being must believe and follow as a Muslim, on the matter of what is contained in the physical copies of the Qurʾān: is it God's eternal speech or just an expression of it and not the speech itself? Is it created or eternal? And when God says: "The Merciful sits upon the Throne" (Q 20:5), is that an act of sitting—literally—or not? And is God's speech formed of letters and sounds or is His speech a subsisting undifferentiated attribute? And if a human being follows the Qurʾān according to its apparent meaning without further interpretation, and says, "I believe in it, just as it was revealed," is this enough? Or is further interpretation necessary? The questioner is a confused man who does not know anything, and his question seeks an easy answer that he will be able to follow and imitate. Give us your legal opinion, may God have mercy upon you.[3]

The subject of Ibn Taymiyya's response to this query, which occupied several pages and was quoted in its entirety by al-Nuwayrī in the *Ultimate Ambition*, was an intervention into some of the most divisive topics in Islamic theology. Ibn Taymiyya's views were controversial at the time, and included the position that the interpretation of the Quran using the hermeneutic strategy of metaphorical exegesis was to distort the text itself and to strip God of the divine attributes described in holy scripture.[4] His learned writings elaborated an approach to theological and ethical matters that broke with centuries of intellectual precedent, attracting both admirers and detractors.

After reading Ibn Taymiyya's incendiary opinion, which took aim at a broad range of positions espoused by the four main Sunni schools of law, Ibn ʿAdlān denounced it angrily and went off to find the Mālikī chief judge Zayn al-Dīn Ibn Makhlūf, a fellow resident at the Nāṣiriyya and one of al-Nuwayrī's patrons. Ibn Makhlūf read the opinion and said: "I must be certain that this handwriting belongs to Ibn Taymiyya. If it is confirmed to be so, then I will take the appropriate measures."[5]

The evening conclave in al-Nuwayrī's room then disbanded, and the chief judge set about confirming the authenticity of the document. Upon determining that it was legitimate, Ibn Makhlūf met with some Mamluk amirs and explained to them that Ibn Taymiyya had to be summoned to answer for his views. This was a risky proposition. Ibn Taymiyya was a famous intellectual with a popular following in Syria. He regularly railed against the Mamluk government for being soft on the religious minorities of the realm, whom he considered to be heretics and fifth columns. During the recent invasion of Syria by the Mongol Ilkhan Ghāzān, Ibn Taymiyya had issued a famous fatwa arguing that Muslims were required to stand up and fight, despite Ghāzān's claim of being a Muslim ruler. To summon such an individual to appear before the sultan could have unpleasant repercussions, for Ibn Taymiyya's allies included the mighty viceroy of Syria, Jamāl al-Dīn Aqqūsh al-Afram.

Indeed, when the chief judge's summons arrived in Syria, the viceroy blocked it from being delivered to Ibn Taymiyya. It so happened, however, that the viceroy's steward, an amir named Alṭunqush, had recently arrived in Cairo to discuss some state business with the sultan, who had awarded some of his own properties in Syria to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afram. As al-Nuwayrī reports, this procedure required some administrative paperwork to be carried out by Ibn Makhlūf, and al-Nuwayrī served as an intermediary between the chief judge and the viceroy's steward. As he reports in the *Ultimate Ambition*, al-Nuwayrī went to Ibn Makhlūf to explain the viceroy's requests, begging permission for al-Afram's steward to enter and asking the chief judge "to treat him honorably." Ibn Makhlūf, who was still furious about the viceroy's interference in the summons of Ibn Taymiyya, let the steward come in and proceeded to dress him down:

When the steward entered Ibn Makhlūf treated him disparagingly and spoke harshly to him, saying: "Are you the steward of Jamāl al-Dīn?" He replied: "Yes." The chief judge said: "May God not cheer him!" He gave the steward a letter to give to his master and said: "Tell him I say this: 'You know what you used to be. And you know that I bought you for Sultan al-Manṣūr. You were awfully needy when you were just a rank-and-filer and then an officer, but God Sublime bestowed His blessings upon you and entrusted you with everything you now have. God attached you to the company of the greatest rulers and you acquired the epithet, King of the Officers. Yet, now you are protecting a man whom I have summoned to fulfill God's claims against him? By God, if you do not send him to me, may He see to your eternal damnation!'"[6]

As we know, the chief judge got his way and Ibn Taymiyya was summoned to Cairo, thus continuing the troubles that had begun with his famous trials in Damascus.[7] This episode, colorfully recounted by al-Nuwayrī who was a direct witness to the events, is revealing of several features of the political environment of the Mamluk sultanate around the turn of the fourteenth century. Above all, it shows that the scholarly class was deeply enmeshed in the empire's politics. The relationship between the state and the ʿulamāʾ, which has often been figured as one of ambivalence or hostility, was in fact codependent even if occasionally tumultuous. Matters of creed and theological debate were not isolated intellectual battles; they had political significance and they involved state officials at the highest levels of government.

The episode furthermore suggests something interesting about the multiple identities that elite bureaucrats such as al-Nuwayrī, Ibn Makhlūf, and Ibn ʿAdlān occupied. The individuals whom the student at the Nāṣiriyya madrasa consulted on the subject of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa were all scholars, but they were also officials in the imperial administration of the Mamluk state. With a tenure of over thirty years, Ibn Makhlūf was the longest-serving chief judge in the Turkish sultanate and one of the consummate political operators of his time. Ibn ʿAdlān was a well-known jurist who had been a deputy of the Shāfiʿī chief judge Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd as well as one of Sultan al-Nāṣir's diplomatic envoys to the Rasūlid court in 1306.[8] Al-Nuwayrī, who fancied himself a scholar and aspiring litterateur, was known at this stage in his career mainly as a bureaucrat in al-Nāṣir's entourage. When the men gathered in al-Nuwayrī's room at the Nāṣiriyya lodged their complaint against Ibn Taymiyya, they did so not only in their capacity as scholars and custodians of an intellectual tradition, but also as political officials.

In chapter 3, I argued that the scholarly ecosystem of Cairo and Damascus represented one of two important contexts for understanding the character of much encyclopedic literature in the fourteenth century. This chapter turns to the parallel world of imperial chanceries and financial bureaus, exploring the

connections between scribal culture and encyclopedic compilation. The bureaucracy, like the colleges, cultivated a foundation in a range of disciplines and imparted many of the practical skills that would prove essential to large-scale compilers, such as bookmaking, recordkeeping, and other forms of archival practice. Like the world of educational institutions, the bureaucracy comprised an expansive network of learned individuals with diverse intellectual interests. Ibn Khaldūn's description of Cairo as "the great center of Islam," which we encountered in chapter 3, was a reference not only to the wonders of its scholarly institutions but also its machinery of government, which together undergirded its "abundant sedentary culture."

However, there are differences between the scholarly and bureaucratic realms that must be reckoned with, which have to do with the ways that knowledge was gathered, recorded, and instrumentalized by the administration. Information procured in the service of governance was of a different character than the knowledge acquired in the course of a madrasa education. It was, in the first instance, contemporary in its outlook. If the path to scholarly excellence in any field involved in its essence the mastery of a curriculum of canonical texts, success in the scribal sphere required an ability to negotiate the ramified social, political, communal, and economic networks that constituted the contemporary empire. To the extent that acquiring fluency in this domain depended upon both practical experience as well as certain types of bookish knowledge, the texts in which this knowledge could be found were transmitted in the form of administrative compendia and historiographical works.

KNOWLEDGE AND THE STATE

The world of letters under the Mamluks was closely intertwined with the empire's politics, and the symbiosis between the scholarly class and the state took different forms. Scholars were often employed as educators in institutions like the Nāṣiriyya, many of which were supported by charitable endowments established by sultans, viceroys, military commanders, and their descendants. Beyond the colleges, there were other types of salaried posts available. Learned individuals were appointed as judges, notaries, librarians, surveyors, financial supervisors, managers, and scribes in the various regional bureaus. Even a cursory survey of the biographical literature from this period brings home the fact that the imperial bureaucracy played a defining role in the careers and experiences of many scholars.

Like al-Nuwayrī, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, and al-Qalqashandī, who all held high office, one encounters hundreds of other compilers who spent time working as administrators. Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī was a chancery scribe and treasury official; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī served as a chief judge, librarian, and administrator of various educational institutions; Ibn al-Akfānī worked at the Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī; al-Maqrīzī was a market inspector; Ibn Ḥijja al-

Ḥamawī, Ibn Nubāta, Ibn Fahd al-Ḥalabī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir, Ibn Manẓūr, and scores of other well-known litterateurs worked in the chancery. There were presumably compilers who never held an administrative position, but like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ, author of the four-volume encyclopedic compendium *Delightful Concepts and the Path to Precepts*, this may not have been for a lack of trying.[9]

It scarcely needs to be said that the connection between knowledge and statecraft is not unique to this historical context. Recent scholarship on the Roman Empire has made the connections between the phenomenon of encyclopedism and the institutions and ideologies of imperial states more explicit. Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh have shown how Rome's position as the center of a huge network of information necessitated the emergence of certain "conceptions of knowledge and particular ways of textualising knowledge," that might be understood as distinctively imperial.[10] Drawing upon Foucault's concept of the archive but locating its roots many centuries earlier, they have proposed reframing Roman textual production in terms of the "desire to itemize and order knowledge" and other paradigmatic impulses of empire.[11] Pliny's *Natural History*, in particular, has received significant attention from the perspective of its relation to imperial ideologies. Trevor Murphy has shown how Roman power was "credited with allowing the encyclopedia's global design to be executed,"[12] while Sorcha Carey has explored the ways that Pliny's work refigures and celebrates imperial ideologies rooted in values of excess and luxury.[13]

The relationship between encyclopedic and imperial order has been observed beyond the Roman case. Paul Magdalino has shown that compilations produced during the Macedonian Renaissance were "concerned with restoring the [Byzantine] empire, its institutions and culture to a state of 'good order' (*eutaxia*) associated with the great Christian emperors of the past."[14] In imperial China, one finds a yet tighter bond between the production of encyclopedic compilations (*leishu*) and the maintenance of the state. Such works were designed to prepare applicants to the civil service for their entrance exams, bringing together all the knowledge that was deemed necessary for a government career.[15] As Anthony Giddens has argued: "There is a fundamental sense . . . in which *all* states have been 'information societies,' since the generation of state power presumes reflexively monitored system reproduction, involving the regularized gathering, storage and control of information applied to administrative ends."[16]

What such cases should suggest to us is not that encyclopedism and empire go hand-in-hand or that these texts and contexts are straightforwardly commensurable. Empire is as difficult to define as encyclopedism and has been the subject of even more debate. Rather, what I propose is that the prevalence of bureaucratic experience in the careers of many Mamluk compilers, coupled with the insights gained from the comparative study of encyclopedism, leads us to a natural question: what impact did the imperial

administration have upon the production, outlook, motivations, readership, and interests of encyclopedists in the Mamluk realms?

On a basic social historical level, the administration represented another essential network that bound together learned individuals from across the empire. As in the case of the scholarly communities created through the landscape of educational institutions, the imperial bureaucracy created a context within which members of the civilian elite gained access to different sources of knowledge that would otherwise have been unavailable to them. As Carl Petry's seminal study of the civilian elite of Cairo in the fifteenth century observed, the upper echelons of the bureaucratic-secretarial class—which included senior chancery secretaries, financial comptrollers, and other high-level adminstrators—were well integrated with other professional categories such as scholars and jurists.[17] Though low-ranking secretaries were often little more than glorified copyists who experienced little upward mobility in the professional arena, high-ranking individuals like al-Nuwayrī were often recruited from outside the secretarial sphere and occupied various types of posts during their professional careers. This multicompetence is a telling feature of the backgrounds of many large-scale compilers; they not only had wide-ranging intellectual interests and educations, but also multifaceted careers in the administration, where they were responsible for a great variety of tasks.

This level of elite integration was a characteristic of the bureaucratic and scholarly classes as well as a broader feature of Mamluk political culture in the first half of the fourteenth century. Having fought off the last Ilkhanid invasions, neutralized the Crusader threat, and laid claim to the custodianship of the Abbasid caliphate and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the Mamluk sultanate saw itself as the center of the Islamic world. And with the elimination of his enemies among the powerful Mamluk amirs and the cultivation of a loyal core of allies and advisors, Sultan al-Nāṣir laid in place the basis for what would become a Qalāwūnid dynasty. As Willem Flinterman and Jo Van Steenbergen have argued, the first few decades of the fourteenth century saw the establishment of a governing structure deeply rooted in the gravity of al-Nāṣir's court and persona.[18] Through public parades, ceremonial banquets, new forms of royal heraldry, and other types of visual culture, al-Nāṣir's regime created a context of rule quite unlike the court of his father or the previous sultanates.

The signature of this context was the level of elite integration between the military-political leadership and the administrative and scholarly classes, a result of a "greater interconnectedness between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's household, Egypt's and Syria's governing elites, the state's bureaucratic and military structures, normative ideas of social order, and cultural aesthetics than ever before in the sultanate's history."[19] The centripetal drift that characterized al-Nāṣir's third reign permeated the world of the bureaucracy and had a pronounced impact on administrative procedures, as I will discuss

below. On a broader level, it also had an impact on the ideological outlook of the civilian elite itself.

An important manifestation of the interconnectedness between the political and scholarly domains took shape in the emergence of what Tarif Khalidi has described as "a new historiography . . . most typically represented in what may be called the imperial bureaucratic chronicle."[20] Tracing the evolution of Arabic historical thought through four epistemic movements—history as ḥadīth, adab, *ḥikma*, and finally *siyāsa*—Khalidi saw in the chronicles of the eleventh through fifteenth centuries a fundamental preoccupation with governance and public order. The Mamluk chronicles represented "the climax of this *siyāsa*-oriented historiography," with their encyclopedic dimensions and archiving of economic, social, and ecological data, administrative documents, biographies of notable citizens, and other forms of documentary information.[21] In Mamluk historiography, knowledge was power: "To survey, to comprehend, to control, to consummate: these are the verbs embedded in the titles of many works of history of that period," which began to regard their object of study as the Islamic world writ large rather than a more narrowly defined region or time span.[22] As Zayde Antrim has argued, Mamluk geographers and historians exhibited a "broader vision of place" than their antecedents, whose own writings reflected a preoccupation with more circumscribed territorial referents.[23]

What accounted for the rise of this form of politically oriented encyclopedic historiography? Khalidi's answer is macroscopic, seeing this development in the context of evolving notions of political legitimacy in the Islamic world and the increased militarization and segmentation of society. A factor that has received less attention is the significance of bureaucratic experience in scholarly careers.[24] For historiographers and other types of encyclopedic compilers in positions of political authority, the bureaucracy cultivated an interest in knowledge about the world, but not just the kind of knowledge available in Abbasid-era geographies and scribal manuals. They sought, instead, to document and instrumentalize the information that came their way about happenings around the empire and beyond its borders. The value of this information lay in its contemporaneity and accuracy—like al-Nuwayrī's description of the hippopotamus he witnessed with the sultan—and not the antique pedigree of its source—as in his discussion of the literary hippopotamus composed of features drawn from Aristotle and al-Jāḥiẓ.[25]

In the preface to the third volume of his twenty-seven-volume compendium, *The Routes of Insight into the Civilized Realms*, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī described for his readers the techniques of authentication that he used to ensure that no errors found their way into his work. As we saw in chapter 3, Ibn Faḍl Allāh regarded most of the canonical works of geography to be full of "old reports about the conditions of long-gone kings, extinct civilizations, and customs that have vanished along with their peoples," and so was intent on filling his enormous book with trustworthy knowledge about

the state of the contemporary world:

> I have set out to confirm what I know and to verify what I do not know by asking one person after another about the state of their homeland and what it contains, in all of its regions. I would ask one man about his country and then ask another and yet another in order to arrive at the truth, recording only the information that their testimonies corroborated. As for the subjects upon which their statements conflicted one another or were confused, I set them aside. Then, I would leave the man in question for a period of time in which he might forget what he had told me. Afterwards, I would ask him the same question again and if he replied in the same way, I would record his statement. But if he committed an error, I would cast his words into the wind. All of this so that I might satisfy my thirst for [accurate] transmission and feel confident in my verification, for I belong to a family whose occupation is to be a gathering place for visiting delegations, the point of every departure and arrival. Indeed, for the kings of Egypt and Syria—may God have mercy on those who have passed and may He preserve those who remain—we continue to be their gate, which opens to every knocker, and their rain-cloud, which bursts forth with generosity. We are the first to receive each of their visitors and the last to see them off.[26]

As a young man, Ibn Faḍl Allāh had worked alongside his father Muḥyī al-Dīn in the service of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. As the head of the chancery, Muḥyī al-Dīn was the empire's secretary of state, responsible for all incoming and outgoing correspondence between the sultanate, its regional bureaus, and foreign polities. Growing up in this milieu, Ibn Faḍl Allāh came to appreciate the political value of accurate intelligence. He describes, in his *Routes of Insight,* how he quizzed his informants on the rulers and notables of their homelands, on their soldiers and officers and merchants, and even on the kinds of clothing that people wore. His interest, above all else, was in the contemporaneity of his information.

This emphasis on the contemporary is a quality not often associated with premodern encyclopedic texts. Ibn Faḍl Allāh's dismissive appraisal of the geographical compendia on his bookshelves may partly have been a rhetorical conceit to clear some space for his own contribution, but he was not wrong about the antiquarian quality of much of the geographical literature that was available to him. Scholars of encyclopedic texts originating in many premodern contexts—from Ancient Rome and China to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment—have similarly identified an epistemological tight-fistedness as a signature of this compilatory activity. Right through the publication of Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* in the mid-eighteenth century, it was commonplace for encyclopedists to circulate and conserve material of a "literary empirical" nature, even as they called for doing away with the dogmas and mythologies of the past.

We have already considered what purpose that material might have held in the worldview of a compiler like al-Nuwayrī, and particularly in his scholarly milieu. In what follows, I take up the question of how the contemporary focus of the *Ultimate Ambition* and other encyclopedic compendia was informed by their authors' experiences as administrators. If the classicizing dimensions of al-Nuwayrī's book originated in his madrasa-bound retirement and his desire to become a master of adab, the aspects of his work that shed light on contemporary experience were the product of the bureaucracy.

THE PERFECT SCRIBE

Despite the centrality of the scribal bureaucracy to Mamluk politics and culture, relatively little is known about its inner workings.[27] The picture of secretarial practice that emerges from the copious administrative literature of the period is not free of idealization, as Bernadette Martel-Thoumian and Maaike van Berkel have argued, nor does it reflect the changes to the various bureaus over time.[28] A clearer picture of these institutions can be arrived at by combining these accounts with those found in chronicles and biographical dictionaries, which reveal that the Mamluk administrative class was markedly different from the scribes under the Abbasids, to whom they are often compared. As Joseph Escovitz has argued, most Mamluk scribes were less devoted to the chancery than their forbears, seeking out appointments in bureaus across the imperial administration, including offices concerned with the less glamorous areas of law, taxation, and notarial secretaryship.[29] They also commonly had religious educations and were referred to as members of the ʿulamāʾ. A survey of biographical reports about fourteenth-century scribes demonstrated that even the most powerful ones "were not a homogeneous caste of 'men of the pen' drawn from a small number of scribal families, and devoted only to the smooth running of the Mamluk administration, but rather a heterogeneous group from diverse backgrounds, with strong and active ties to the religious institution."[30]

Nonetheless, the classical model of the Abbasid scribe and his encyclopedic erudition continued to be a leitmotif of descriptions of scribal education from the Mamluk period, and al-Nuwayrī was as guilty as many of his contemporaries in advancing a romanticized portrait of the chancery scribe. In one of the largest chapters of the *Ultimate Ambition* (§2.5.14)—occupying over two volumes on its own—he provides a detailed discussion of "the scribes and the eloquent ones" (*al-kuttāb wa-l-bulaghāʾ*). This material is divided into five subchapters, each one dealing with a different branch of secretaryship: the chancery (*kitābat al-inshāʾ*); administrative and financial secretaryship (*kitābat al-dīwān wa-qalam al-taṣarruf*); legal secretaryship (*kitābat al-ḥukm wa-l-shurūṭ*); copying manuscripts (*kitābat al-naskh*); and the compilation of pedagogical texts (*kitābat al-taʿlīm*). The majority of the chapter is occupied by the discussion of the chancery, most of which al-

Nuwayrī copied from a slim work by his contemporary Ibn Fahd al-Ḥalabī (d. 725/1325) entitled *The Proper Means to Arrive at the Craft of Letter Writing* (*Ḥusn al-tawassul ilā ṣināʿat al-tarassul*).[31] This discussion centered on the education of the chancery scribe and his cultivation of eloquence. In addition to "general subjects" (*umūr kulliyya*) such as Quran, ḥadīth, Arabic grammar, lexicography, rhetoric, poetry, history, and law, the chancery scribe was urged to further hone his craft by attending to specialized subjects (*umūr khāṣṣa*) like the mastery of metaphor, simile, metonymy, allusion, paranomasia, and other literary figures.[32]

As suggested in chapter 1, there is a straightforward way in which the *Ultimate Ambition* and other encyclopedic works composed by scribal officials may be read as providing the content of the perfect scribe's encyclopedic education. This is the prism most commonly employed by historians to interpret the function of these types of works, and it is an argument that has its origins in the history of Abbasid scribal culture, which was responsible for producing the great adab literature of the ninth and tenth centuries. The antiquity of this model is not a reason in and of itself to discount it: many famous officials from this period do appear to have had encyclopedic educations like the one described by Ibn Fahd. However, these accounts do not tell the full story.

The production of documents for the chancery and other bureaus did not just test a scribe's ability to express himself eloquently in a pure standard of Arabic. It was, just as importantly, a matter of understanding the contemporary state of the empire and its shifting political alliances, bureaucratic appointments, social protocols, and what sorts of codes, formulas, and types of address were required in composing official documents. A grounding in the encyclopedic curriculum of classical adab got one's foot in the door, but it was useless without an awareness of who was who in the social and professional landscapes of the civilian elite. This is the second half of what the great administrative encyclopedias offered, in varying degrees: not just classical learning but also an orientation to scribal protocol.

This kind of information was found in scribal manuals like Ibn Faḍl Allāh's *The Explanation of Noble Protocols* (*al-Taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf*) and the two works that were written to supersede it, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh's (d. 786/1384) *The Cultivation of the Explanation* (*Tathqīf al-Taʿrīf*) and al-Qalqashandī's *Dawn for the Night-Blind*. Speaking about Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh's *Cultivation* in the preface to his own work, al-Qalqashandī says that this book was such a success when it was composed that even people who were known for their generosity would not lend out copies of it to others.[33] It was a must-read for anyone interested in pursuing a career as a chancery scribe. What was so special about this work, and what did it offer that was not already contained in the rich tradition of scribal manuals from earlier centuries? The answer lies in the subject matter that it covered, which was not simply epistolography or poetics but rather something much more specific, less rarefied, and yet more

urgently needed: an exposure to contemporary protocols, formulas, and scribal practices (*al-muṣṭalaḥ*).

The term *muṣṭalaḥ* is connected with the notion of convention. It is most well known in the context of Islamic legal studies, appearing in the debates about whether language is conventional (*iṣṭilāḥī*)—evolving or emerging naturally in a community of speakers—or is instituted by God (*waḍʿ al-lugha*). In the scribal context, it denotes the domain of textual conventions, terminology, and formulas, with an emphasis on the contemporaneity of the subject matter. In the preface to his *Cultivation of the Explanation*, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh states that every sample of writing in his book includes an indication of whether it is contemporary in its format and conventions.[34] In the entries themselves, we see him playing a very active role along these lines—pointing out to the reader the correct titles and formulas of address for various figures of authority, from the Pope and the ruler of Venice to the vice-governor of Aleppo and the Ḥanbalī chief judge of Cairo.

This was a precise business. Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh was careful to point out situations of transfer of authority, in which he had not yet received word of the identity of the new officeholder or the appropriate honorifics for a new head of state. The muṣṭalaḥ was, by nature, something transient and changeable—qualities that one does not normally associate with the contents of scribal literature or treatises on secretaryship. Unlike the general cultivation of eloquence through classical models of prose and poetry, the muṣṭalaḥ had a much shorter shelf life.

A typical example of this sort of knowledge concerned the matter of whether to address the recipient of a letter with the formula *al-majlis al-sāmī bi-l-yāʾ* or *al-majlis al-sāmī bi-ghayri yāʾ* (roughly translated, "His Excellencyy" or "His Excellency"). According to al-Qalqashandī, the presence of an extra *yāʾ* (or, in the English translation, an extra letter "y") was a subtle distinction of status.[35] By the mid-fourteenth century, the extra *yāʾ* was reserved for military generals while lower-ranking officials such as provincial governors received the single *yāʾ*. Omitting the extra letter when it was expected could presumably cause grave offense, which is why Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh was careful to spell out exactly when it was to be used and not used.[36]

It is easy to dismiss this sort of thing as so much stuffy protocol and diplomatic overkill. But what is important to note is that the muṣṭalaḥ functioned as a kind of code shared among a relatively small group of people and was sensitive to hierarchical relations in the real world, which were always in a process of flux. The function of the formula was not simply to flatter but to establish the recipient's status within a relational system. Unlike, for example, a typical praise poem—in which it is often difficult to determine whether the object of praise was the sultan himself or just a well-to-do patron known for his generosity—the diplomatic formulas represented a system that corresponded to a social and political reality.

Sometimes, the protocol also reflected an emotional reality. For example, when discussing the way to address Khāwand Baraka, the mother of the sultan al-Ashraf Shaʿbān, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh took exception to the fact that her formula was not very different from that of other noble women such as the sultan's wives and female relatives. He wrote: "I disapproved of this practice because the sultan used to venerate her greatly and he would kiss her hands, so it would have been appropriate to write to her with [a reference to] the kissing of her hands."[37] In other words, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh's disapproval stemmed from a highly specific and affective circumstance: the relationship between a mother and her son. This specific practice apparently did not become part of the muṣṭalaḥ, as al-Qalqashandī reports seeing letters to Khāwand Baraka that did not pick up Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh's suggestion. But it is an example, I propose, of just how limited a certain practice could be in order to qualify it as a kind of muṣṭalaḥ. In this case, there were only three people involved: the sultan, his mother, and the perceptive chancery scribe who took it upon himself, unsuccessfully, to establish a protocol based on a specific practice.[38]

The relevance of the chancery to the compilations that emerged from it was only partly about the ideal of literary erudition that it cultivated. The second dimension concerned the very specific knowledge that elite scribes were expected to have about who was who in the empire's military, judicial, political, and scholarly strata, and why they mattered. In this regard, the salience of historiography—which, alongside adab, was perhaps the most widely represented discourse in Mamluk encyclopedic compilation—becomes apparent, along with the disciplines of geography, prosopography, legal practice, and other spheres of knowledge encompassed by the works of Ibn Faḍl Allāh and al-Qalqashandī. And beyond the chancery, in the domain of financial administration, these subjects would assume even greater significance.

AL-NUWAYRĪ AT THE BUREAU OF THE PRIVY PURSE

In 1302, at the age of twenty-three, al-Nuwayrī left Cairo to manage the sultan's properties in Syria.[39] Two and a half years later, he returned to Cairo, where he was appointed to the Bureau of the Privy Purse (*dīwān al-khāṣṣ*), overseeing al-Nāṣir's properties and several of the institutions endowed by his father, while living at the Nāṣiriyya madrasa.[40] This was an important position in a bureau that gained considerable power during al-Nāṣir's reign. Al-Nuwayrī served this office for five years until September 1309, when he joined the sultan in the Syrian fortress of al-Karak during his second interregnum. They returned to Cairo at the end of February 1310, but al-Nuwayrī soon fell out of favor due to a controversy involving the steward of the sultan, a man named Ibn ʿUbāda. Al-Nuwayrī does not refer to this incident in the *Ultimate Ambition*, but it was presumably a well-publicized

scandal because several of his biographers allude to it. Al-Maqrīzī provides the most detail:

> He grew close to the Sultan through the intermediary of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. ʿUbāda, the Sultan's deputy, who appointed him as overseer of the Nāṣiriyya and Manṣūriyya *madrasa*s and other things, and facilitated his meetings with al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, and the Sultan began to summon him all the time and converse with him. It so happened that he asked al-Nuwayrī about Ibn ʿUbāda, and gradually fooled him into slandering him. The Sultan informed Ibn ʿUbāda about that, and handed al-Nuwayrī over to him to do with him as he pleased, so he gave him a harsh flogging and confiscated his property. The people disapproved greatly of al-Nuwayrī and impugned his slander of Ibn ʿUbāda, for he was, in all truth, the source of his favor [with the sultan].[41]

The vicissitudes of government service and the fickleness of rulers are well-known tropes in the biographies of famous scribes, from Ibn Ḥamdūn to Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, and al-Nuwayrī's relationship with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad fits this pattern. Navigating the treacherous waters of a ruler's coterie was the subject of a great deal of literature about statecraft, both in the mirrors-for-princes genre as well as more technical manuals for the administrator. In the *Ultimate Ambition*'s substantial chapter on scribal culture and practice (§2.5.14), al-Nuwayrī devotes much discussion to these matters, which sheds light on his own relationship with al-Nāṣir. Among the materials he presents is a passage attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 139/756), one of the founding figures of the adab tradition:

> Do not befriend kings until you have trained yourself to obey them in matters that are reprehensible to you; to agree with them on matters that you disagree with; to appraise things according to their desires rather than to yours; to not conceal your secrets from them nor to arouse their curiosity about what you might have concealed; to keep their secrets from everyone else; to strive continually for their satisfaction; to act amiably toward all of their requests; to corroborate their arguments; to accept whatever they say; to embellish their opinions; to suppress your frustration towards their hateful acts; to not take credit for their good deeds; to proclaim their virtues far and wide; to conceal their vices; to befriend those whom they are close to even if they are distant to you; to distance yourself from those whom they dislike even if they are dear to you; to concern yourself with their affairs even when they themselves are not concerned; to preserve what they squander; to remember what they forget; to not burden them with your troubles while burdening yourself with each one of their troubles; and to be content with their failings while not being content with your own painful efforts. If you are loyal when they entrust you, cautious when they befriend you, faithful when they place their

confidence in you, humble when they forsake you, obliging when they enrage you, then you will teach them while appearing to learn from them, and you will cultivate them while seeming to be cultivated by them, all the while thanking them while not making them thank you. Otherwise, get as far away from them as possible.[42]

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was author of the *Adab al-Kabīr*, an early and greatly influential Arabic *Fürstenspiegel*, and the translator into Arabic of *Kalīla wa-Dimna,* one of the most famous collections of Indian fables about statecraft. He was also, of course, famously tortured and put to death by his patron, the caliph al-Manṣūr (reigned 136–58/754–75), and as a result of his suffering came to occupy a position as the patron saint of secretaries who were mistreated by rulers. While al-Nuwayrī never mentions his conflict with Ibn ʿUbāda, it seems reasonable that he would have seen his falling from grace in this way.

But there is more to the Ibn ʿUbāda affair than personal grievance. The episode also sheds light on al-Nuwayrī's political ambitions and the role that elite scholar-bureaucrats played within the Mamluk sultanate. As Donald Little has shown, Ibn ʿUbāda was a powerful figure and a close advisor to Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who occupied an important position in the state bureaucracy at a pivotal moment in its history.[43] As the sultan's steward, he wielded great influence and was offered the position of the vizierate, which he turned down. When Ibn ʿUbāda died in 1310, he was succeeded by the famous Coptic convert, Karīm al-Dīn al-Kabīr. This individual, though initially appointed the sultan's steward, was then given the new title of Supervisor of the Bureau of the Privy Purse (*nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*), thereby inaugurating a position that would wield tremendous power for much of the fourteenth century.

The sources suggest that "nothing was done in Cairo without Karīm al-Dīn's approval, whether employing a scribe or paying a viceroy's stipend," and al-Nuwayrī himself claimed that the sultan "delegated to him complete disposal of property, appointments, buying and selling, marriage, manumission of slaves," and other matters.[44] Karīm al-Dīn also oversaw financial-administrative centralization in the form of several cadastral surveys in Syria and Egypt, which had the effect of nearly tripling the sultan's financial holdings (from one-sixth to five-twelfths of all tax revenues).[45] And under Karīm al-Dīn's successor, Tāj al-Dīn Isḥāq b. al-Qammāt, the offices of the Egyptian viceroy (*nāʾib al-salṭana*) and the vizierate were both abolished and their powers divided between the secretary of state (*kātib al-sirr*), the superintendent of scribal offices (*shādd al-dawāwīn*), and the *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*, the latter being first among equals.[46]

In the context of al-Nuwayrī's career, the year 1310 was a pivotal one. In February, al-Nāṣir returned from al-Karak to reassume the throne in Cairo and begin his third reign, which would last until 1341. Both al-Nuwayrī and Ibn

ʿUbāda had accompanied al-Nāṣir to al-Karak in 1309 and were rewarded for their loyalty by being reappointed to high office upon their return the following year. Given that Ibn ʿUbāda had served al-Nāṣir's father, Sultan Qalāwūn, he would likely have been an old man in 1310, and although there is no direct evidence for this, it is not unreasonable to suppose that al-Nuwayrī may have fancied himself well suited to take over his superior's position in due course.

At this critical moment of transition, during one of his private audiences with al-Nāṣir, al-Nuwayrī apparently said something about his patron that annoyed the sultan, who informed Ibn ʿUbāda. What might that have been? We have no way of knowing, but as I discussed in chapter 3, al-Nuwayrī had reason to look unkindly upon Ibn ʿUbāda for his double-dealings in the establishment of the Nāṣiriyya madrasa. At any rate, by the end of the year 1310, al-Nuwayrī had been dispatched to the Syrian town of Tripoli, Ibn ʿUbāda was dead, and the age of Karīm al-Dīn al-Kabīr had begun.[47] Any hope that al-Nuwayrī may have had for attaining the position of *wakīl al-khāṣṣ* was lost forever.

While al-Nuwayrī did spend a brief spell as the head of a chancery, his career was mostly devoted to financial secretaryship. In this respect, he came from a different world than Ibn Faḍl Allāh, whose family members were senior chancery officials; his father Muḥyī al-Dīn and brother ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn held the office of secretary of state (*kātib al-sirr*) for over half a century. Most bureaucrats, even elite ones, did not have such a pedigree, and in this sense al-Nuwayrī's career is a better guide to the world of financial administration—where most officials were employed—than Ibn Faḍl Allāh's experience in the chancery. The relationship between the chancery and the ideal of encyclopedic erudition it cultivated has already been explored at length. How were the financial bureaus relevant to al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedic project? I consider that question below.

BETWEEN THE CHANCERY AND THE FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Had al-Nuwayrī ended book 2 of the *Ultimate Ambition* with his discussion of the chancery, he would not have departed from the general portrait of scribal education found in many historical accounts. However, following the treatment of chancery secretaryship al-Nuwayrī moves on to a discussion of financial administration, which turns nearly everything he said earlier on its head:

> Let us now discuss that which relates to financial administration. We previously discussed the chancery clerks, their importance and prestige, nobility and eminence, eloquence and gracefulness, righteousness and munificence . . . and many other praiseworthy attributes . . . Well, the

financial clerks are even more precise and more involved in the organization of funds, and more cogent in their proofs, and clearer in their explanations.

God Most High said in His Book: ". . . that you may know the number of the years, and the *accounting*, and everything We have distinguished very distinctly" (Q 17:12).[48] One of the interpreters of the Quran suggested that when God reported what Joseph said—"Set me over the store-houses of the land; I am a *knowing guardian*" (Q 12:55)—what God meant was, "a financial clerk" (*kātib ḥāsib*).[49]

Al-Bukhārī reported the following Prophetic tradition on the authority of Abū Ḥumayd al-Sāʿidī: "The Messenger of God employed a man named Ibn al-Lutbiyya from the Asad tribe to collect the alms of the Salīm clan. When he arrived (with the alms), Muḥammad held him to account (*ḥāsabahu*)." This demonstrates that the Messenger of God was himself an accountant.[50]

Thanks to the financial clerks, money is preserved and profits are calculated, the laws of countries are fixed, and new possessions are distinguished from inherited ones. The chancery clerks cannot boast of a virtue without [the financial clerks] boasting of many virtues. For every high rank they ascend to, the others ascend to multiple ranks. For every epistle they distinguish themselves with, the others supersede them in that as well. For every official secret they keep, the others keep one as well . . . Furthermore, the financial clerks have been given duties that the chancery clerks have been prevented from undertaking, and their pens have written on issues that the others' have been forbidden from writing on . . . We do not measure them against each other by way of competition or exaggeration or boasting, but every group has a virtue that cannot be denied.[51]

For such a reserved and conservative compiler as al-Nuwayrī, this comment is about as energetic an intervention as one could expect to encounter. There is a streak of revanchism in his tone, a stridency that betrays the chip on his shoulder perhaps acquired as a clerk in the upstart Bureau of the Privy Purse, which was reaching the apogee of its influence at the time he worked there and yet was still not as prestigious an institution as the venerable (but by now far less influential) chancery. The invocation of the verses from the Quran and the Prophetic tradition also reveals the corporatist identity of the financial clerks, who claimed the prophets Joseph and Muḥammad as illustrious predecessors. Several decades later, al-Qalqashandī would forcefully argue the opposite case, declaring his allegiance to the chancery and depicting the financial clerks as number-crunching rubes.[52] He writes in the preface to his *Dawn of the Night-Blind*:

[Egypt] possesses such superior clerks as no other kingdom or city, and it gathers together such men of excellence and cultivation (*ahl al-faḍl wa-l-*

adab) as had never been gathered in any country. And it continues to be crowned by those cultivated people, both young and old, and adorned by the most excellent clerks . . .

Like stars in the sky, as each star passes on
Another appears for the stars to cluster around[53]

In this verse, the night sky is a metaphor for Egypt, a place of refuge for all of the luminous stars of the Muslim firmament, who were replaced over the generations by new rising stars. Al-Nuwayrī saw things differently, as a result of his experiences in the Bureau of the Privy Purse. In his capacity as Ibn ʿUbāda's deputy, al-Nuwayrī would have been responsible less for the kinds of duties romantically associated with the chancery (laboring over a recherché pun, translating a letter into an exotic language, etc.) but rather the sorts of tasks that would later serve him well in the compilation of an encyclopedic compendium: collating and cross-referencing oral and written sources, itemizing and cataloging important documents, and developing a familiarity with the day-to-day affairs of a great variety of individuals who came into contact with the sultan's properties, from tailors and upholsterers to judges and generals. Having made his case for the superiority of the financial clerks over the chancery scribes, al-Nuwayrī goes on:

When I arrived, in this book of mine, to the chapter on secretaryship, I wanted to pass over the issue of financial secretaryship and limit myself to the discussion of the chancery, in the custom of those who had written on this subject. But a friend asked me to include a useful summary here from which the administrator might learn the practice of administration, and be guided by it in matters of taxes and inventories which he must file himself or request to be filed. So I presented this small sampling by way of responding to his request and fulfilling his hopes. My discussion of the craft of secretaryship is only a drop in the ocean, a tiny bead on the necklace of its pearls. The novice must thoroughly comprehend this knowledge and linger upon it.

When I wrote what I did about this craft, I had yet to come across a single book or page on this subject. Nor had I glimpsed a sign of it or heard anyone sum it up it in a single expression. Not a word had been uttered about it, nor had anyone loosened the reins of his eloquence to gallop upon its racecourses. I had no such thing to use as a model, no loom to weave upon, no path to follow, no example to emulate. Indeed, I found the door to this subject locked, its curtain lowered. Every scribe had formerly depended upon his own knowledge, and the reckoning of his own intellect. So I reconsidered my plan and felt inclined toward it after having previously retreated from it. I knocked at the door and it opened after having been locked. I lifted its curtain and it came unstitched after having been sewn tight. I mounted its horse and it was gentle after having

been refractory. I ascended its summit and the path to success became clear to me.[54]

What sort of picture emerges from al-Nuwayrī's description of bureaucratic protocols beyond the chancery? Above all was the importance accorded to accurate recordkeeping and careful accounting. The army secretary, for example, was responsible for maintaining lists of all the soldiers and their commanding officers, the auxiliary troops from among the Turcoman and Bedouin tribesman along with the number of horses and camels they contributed to the royal stables, and the details of their compensation through land grants, currency, or fungible commodities. The administrator in charge of the sultan's larder was responsible for arranging the daily banquets that served the sultan and his companions, a demanding position that required a constant accounting of "meats, seasonings, vegetables, spices, sweets, and nuts, as well as perfume, incense, fire logs, and other things." The royal kitchens received shipments of commodities from all over the empire, and so the secretary had to ensure that orders for dwindling stocks were placed in time for them to be replenished without disrupting the daily service.

In the sultan's buttery, the responsible official oversaw the preparation and stocking of "sugar drinks, theriacs, medicinal powders, pastes, pastilles, raisin drinks, near beer, dates, herbs, sweets, electuaries," and various other types of refreshments and restoratives. The secretaries of the sultan's vestiary, the furniture storehouse, and the arsenal similarly kept tabs on an enormous quantity of valuable objects or commodities, ensuring that all raw materials were properly accounted for and that the manufactured items were kept in working order. Among all the sultan's properties, the treasury required the most assiduous regime of bookkeeping, as al-Nuwayrī's description attests:

> Integrity and trustworthiness are the mainstays of this position, for the treasuries of kings in our age cannot be fully inventoried due to their size, abundant contents, and the immensity of their treasures. Were a scribe commissioned to prepare an account of the financial revenues of the sultan's treasury for a single year, he would have to be appointed solely to this task for an entire year without working on anything else. By the time the account was complete [at the end of the second year] and corrected by the secretary of the treasury [during the third year], its anticipated benefit would have long passed. Furthermore, the secretary of the treasury would have neglected the receipts of the third year, having been occupied with the first year's bookkeeping.
>
> Having established the inability of the scribe to prepare such an account, it is obvious that the mainstays of the management of the sultan's treasury are trustworthiness and integrity. However, there are a few additional things that the scribe is in need of. He must register all the loads of goods and valuable merchandise that he receives, and compare their

> contents with their accompanying descriptions.[55] He should note down the weights, lengths, and quantities of the goods, no matter what their type or description, and organize them by the region, port, province, or kingdom (from which they arrived). He must indicate all the gifts and offerings received, arranging them by type. In the same way, he must keep an account of all the goods that were sold, when necessity called. . . . He must also register all the gifts that arrive at the sultan's treasury from kings and viceroys, comparing them with what had been sent previously, and making note of any increase or decrease of value. He must have all of this information in the back of his mind so that he can produce it if asked by his superior, and if he does not, he should not contrive it. The scribe must register the gift-giving habits of the kings and what had been sent to them in previous years. He should also note what they had sent in the way of gifts, and what types of honors and gifts their envoys were in the habit of giving and receiving.[56]

While the senior officials in charge of such important properties as the sultan's larder, buttery, vestiary, arsenal, and treasury represented just a fraction of the larger administrative class, al-Nuwayrī's discussion of lowlier bureaucrats makes clear that the importance of recordkeeping and archival practices was not confined to the management of the royal household. The average legal secretary was expected to not only know the principles of jurisprudence, but also the science of accounting, the copyist's trade, and the specialized art of composing administrative documents for every possible transaction, including: "all manner of debts, assignments of debt, joint partnerships, fungible and non-fungible loans, gifts and dowries, voluntary alms and revocation, transfers of ownership, sales, returns due to blemishes, annulled contracts, preemption, forward buying, rescinded sales, reciprocal property sharing, all manner of hiring contracts, sharecropping, contracts concerning surety-bonds, emancipation of slaves (during the master's lifetime or following their death), conditional enfranchisement, marriage law and all that relates to it, divorce, conditional divorce, annulled marriages, and many other things."[57]

As in the case of the chancery, a knowledge of theory—in this case legal theory—only got one so far. Just as important was an understanding of the worldly applications of one's legal education, as well as a knowledge of how to apply it in a scribal context. In his discussion of legal secretaryship, al-Nuwayrī makes this point explicitly, arguing that it was essential for the scribe to have an understanding of jurisprudence in order to hold his own in the company of lawyers who attended the sultan's audiences. A scribe who had no grounding in jurisprudence would have to keep his mouth shut, or else speak up and reveal his ignorance, and his documents would be full of errors. Though some heedless scribes felt that it was enough to only know the scribal protocols and not the jurisprudence itself, al-Nuwayrī insists that this was a

mistake. Even if jurisprudence was a traditional science and not a rational one (*al-fiqh amr naqlī lā ʿaqlī*), tradition did not mean mere imitation of boilerplate language.[58] On the other hand, al-Nuwayrī argued that a knowledge of jurisprudence and classical Arabic without a thorough exposure to the craft of secretaryship and the protocols of the scribes would lead to disaster. A letter that was free of solecisms and methodologically sound with regard to the knowledge of the law would be rejected by its recipient if it did not follow "the path of the scribes and their protocols."[59]

CONCLUSION

Al-Nuwayrī's description of the daily responsibilities of the financial scribes indicates that the sultanate was in many respects a "paper state," one that took administrative protocols seriously in maintaining its rule. That isn't to say that the role of institutions in political life outweighed the significance of personal ties between the ruling household and the military, scholarly, and administrative elites in the exercise of power. However, to diminish the importance of the state's agencies and its mechanisms of recordkeeping, legal documentation, and financial accounting is to miss a large part of the picture.

As scholarship on other historical contexts has suggested, the similarities between the duties of the bureaucrat and those of the encyclopedist were not accidental. Gathering vast quantities of information, collating sources, and synthesizing diverse types of knowledge represented the core activities of both the administrator and the large-scale compiler. In a concrete way, a career in bureaucracy helped develop the skills of archiving and itemization that any compiler would have possessed. Such skills were cultivated by both the bureaucrat and the scholar. What set the two domains apart, however, was a difference in the types of knowledge that were valued. The world of administration was one of contemporary, mutable information. That isn't to say that the academic domain was hide-bound and impervious to change; it is simply to emphasize that success in the scribal field required an adeptness and sensitivity to the contemporary.

The common thread uniting the diverse professions that comprised the administration—from financial comptroller to notary to army secretary—was the importance attached to gathering data in the service of the state. The empire's bureaucrats were its most "adroit procurers" of information.[60] By virtue of their access to demographic, financial, historical, and legal materials about the empire's subjects, institutions, and communities, the bureaucratic class was in a unique position to shape the politics of their day in a manner that no other professional group could achieve.[61] Beyond schooling bureaucrats in practical archival methods and connecting them through the network of its offices, the administration had a formative influence upon the compilatory literature produced by its representatives.

CHAPTER FIVE

WORKING METHODS

THE STUDY OF MANUSCRIPT CULTURE in the Islamic world is a subject that has attracted scholarly attention in recent decades, even if the evolution and diversity of copying practices remain mostly unexplored.[1] Still less is known about the strategies of collation, edition, and source management used to produce large compilations during the Mamluk period, when such works were composed in great quantity and drew upon hundreds of sources, swelling in physical size and thematic scope. The material conditions of book production during this age of bibliomania remain insufficiently studied. What working methods did copyists use to assemble multivolume manuscripts? How did one distinguish one's own copies of authoritative texts from those of other copyists? What kind of training was necessary to become a successful copyist?

The compiler whose masterwork is the subject of this book offers us the opportunity to explore these questions on the basis of several sources of evidence. First, al-Nuwayrī's copying prowess is addressed by his biographers, who mention several aspects of his working method, such as the number of pages he produced each day, his techniques of collating and verifying his sources, and how much money he commanded for different manuscripts. Furthermore, several autograph volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition* have been preserved in libraries in Leiden, Paris, Berlin, and Istanbul. These texts are valuable for what they reveal about the production of fair copies and about the range of calligraphic scripts at al-Nuwayrī's disposal, a subject he discusses in the *Ultimate Ambition*.

In addition to his compiling his own book, al-Nuwayrī was noted for making fine copies of other texts such as al-Bukhārī's canonical ḥadīth collection, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, which he sold while working on the *Ultimate Ambition*. I have discovered what appears to be one of these copies; it offers some insight into an author's approach to compiling his own work as opposed to copying the work of a different author, as well as the differences between copying ḥadīth manuscripts and other types of books. Al-Nuwayrī addresses

some of these matters in a revealing discussion of the education and practice of the copyist, which appears in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s chapter on secretaryship. In this chapter, I treat each of these topics with the aim of exploring aspects of al-Nuwayrī's working method and shedding light on the theory and practice of the all-important craft of copying.

A MASTER COPYIST

In an age of big books, the *Ultimate Ambition*'s enormous size may have been less exceptional than it appears to our eyes. However, the fact that al-Nuwayrī produced at least two copies of his nine-thousand-page book while making and selling many copies of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was noteworthy even by contemporary standards. As his acquaintance Kamāl al-Dīn Jaʿfar b. Thaʿlab al-Udfuwī (d. 748/1347) recounts in his biographical dictionary:

> He wrote a great deal, copying al-Bukhārī several times, and compiled a large history in thirty volumes . . . He held numerous scribal offices: he was Supervisor of Army Revenues in Tripoli and he oversaw the bureau of al-Daqhaliyya and al-Murtāḥiyya. He was intelligent, handsome, noble, and generous, and loving to his friends. He fasted for Ramaḍān during the year that he died, and he recited the Qurʾān assiduously. Each day after the afternoon prayers he would commence reading the Qurʾān until sunset. He was afflicted with pain in the ends of his fingers, which was the cause of his death. He died on the 21st of Ramaḍān in the year 733 [June 5, 1333 CE], and he was the author of some decent poetry and prose. He was my friend. May God have mercy on him.[2]

Al-Udfuwī's description of the *Ultimate Ambition* as "a large history in thirty volumes" provides an indication of its contemporary classification, as well as a sign that the work circulated in toto within a few years of al-Nuwayrī's death and was not broken up into its constituent parts. The great fourteenth-century historian, chancery clerk, litterateur, and biographer Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī includes al-Nuwayrī in his *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, a biographical dictionary comprised of al-Ṣafadī's contemporaries. The two men, however, do not appear to have met, as al-Ṣafadī bases his biography of al-Nuwayrī almost entirely on al-Udfuwī, with the exception of the following report:[3]

> He copied al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* eight times. He would draft a copy, collate it, copy the audition notes (*al-ṭibāq*), bind it, and sell it for between 700 or 1,000 *dirham*s, and he sold his work of history once to Jamāl al-Kufāt for 2,000 *dirham*s. He would fill three manuscript quires (*karārīs*) in a day.[4]

The quires of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s autographs are quinions, which suggests that al-Nuwayrī could copy sixty pages in a single day. That he could

demand such a significant sum for a copy of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (a widely available text) speaks to his talents as a copyist. On the other hand, it is interesting that he would part with a copy of his own thirty-one-volume magnum opus for only two or three times the price of the single-volume ḥadīth collection. If this report is correct, then the comparatively cheaper cost of the *Ultimate Ambition* may be explained by al-Nuwayrī's status as a lesser-known author during his own lifetime. Still, it should be registered that the price al-Ṣafadī reports—two thousand dirhams for a thirty-one-volume manuscript—represented an enormous sum of money at this time. To put it in perspective, consider the fact that the monthly salary of the librarian at the Nāṣiriyya madrasa, where al-Nuwayrī lived and worked, was thirty dirhams, which means that the price of the *Ultimate Ambition* would have been over five times greater than the librarian's reported annual salary.[5]

Al-Ṣafadī writes in his larger compendium, *The Complete Book of Biographies* (*al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*), that he had seen a copy of the *Ultimate Ambition*,[6] as did the Syrian jurist Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī (d. 779/1377) who described the work as "a book on *adab* and history in thirty volumes . . . [entitled] *Muntahā al-arab fī ʿilm al-adab*," which he had examined, copied, and benefited from.[7] Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) called al-Nuwayrī a "master copyist" (*nāsikh muṭīq*) and a rarity of his age, but mistakenly claimed that he had composed two thirty-volume collections: one on adab and another on history.[8] It is possible that Ibn Kathīr was confused by an earlier report from the Coptic historian Mufaḍḍal b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil (fl. 759/1358), who writes that al-Nuwayrī sold two copies of the *Ultimate Ambition* for 1,200 *dirham*s each, which, as we will see, tallies with the manuscript evidence.[9] The work's correct title first appears in al-Maqrīzī's (d. 845/1442) *Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-kabīr al-muqaffā*, a biographical dictionary about prominent Egyptians.[10] Al-Maqrīzī's account rehearses some of the previous material from al-Udfuwī and al-Ṣafadī and also provides some important additions, notably the description of al-Nuwayrī's history as "famous" (*mashhūr*).

The biographical literature, then, provides several glimpses of al-Nuwayrī's working method. It suggests that he produced at least two copies of the *Ultimate Ambition* over the course of about twenty years, that he could copy about three quires or sixty pages a day, and that he also made several expensive copies of al-Bukhārī's ḥadīth collection while working on his own book. It is little wonder that he was known as a master copyist or that he should have suffered from pain in the ends of his fingers.

What these descriptions elide, however, is the great amount of work that went into producing the fair copies that were sold. Most of the extant autograph manuscripts, as we will see, are very fine specimens. There is a hardly a slip of the pen across their hundreds of pages, which testifies not only to al-Nuwayrī's great skill as a master calligrapher, but also to the fact that these fair copies would have been preceded by a draft copy of the text, abstracted from the hundreds of books that al-Nuwayrī consulted while

composing the *Ultimate Ambition*. In other words, the production of the two thirty-volume copies that his biographers mention represented the culmination of a much larger process of copying, collating, and editing.

THE ART OF COPYING

Among the several thousand individuals discussed in *The Complete Book of Biographies*, al-Ṣafaḍī devoted a laudatory notice to his teacher, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, one of the greatest traditionists of his age and a preeminent compiler. Al-Dhahabī was himself the author of a massive biographical dictionary, *The Lives of Noble Figures* (*Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*), and a universal chronicle, *The History of Islam* (*Tārīkh al-Islām*), along with various other large-scale compendia. Describing his teacher, al-Ṣafadī wrote: "He compiled a great deal, and benefited many. He was very active in composition, making available through abridgment the nourishment found in lengthy works, and he wrote in his own hand an uncountable number of things."[11]

The biographical literature of the period suggests that the practice of compilation encompassed a large sphere of activities, with a rich vocabulary of terms used to differentiate them, even if the boundaries between these practices were sometimes blurred. In al-Dhahabī's obituary, al-Ṣafadī makes use of several of these terms: *jamaʿa* (collect, compile), *taṣnīf* (arrangement, classification), *ikhtiṣār* (abridgment), *taṭwīl* (enlargement), *taʾlīf* (composition), *kataba bi-khaṭṭihi* (writing in one's own hand, as opposed to relying on an amanuensis). An active compiler was usually engaged in several related activities: reading the works of other authors; making notes and copying passages or entire volumes, sometimes into an aide-mémoire (*tadhkira*); abridging longer texts for one's students or for the marketplace; enlarging texts through commentaries or super-commentaries; rearranging well-known works into different forms; and producing original compositions.

Here, we can see how the mechanisms of summary, amplification, and concatenation discussed in chapter 2 existed in practice, and it is not difficult to grasp how new compositions emerged from this matrix of activity. At the end of al-Nuwayrī's discussion of secretaryship and its different branches and duties in the *Ultimate Ambition*, he turns to the subject of the specialized craft of copying manuscripts (*kitābat al-naskh*) and particularly scholarly texts (*naskh al-ʿulūm*).[12]

> As for he who copies [works of] the sciences, such as jurisprudence, philology, the principles of jurisprudence and other things, it is most fitting and suitable for him not to begin writing anything until he has surveyed the subject, reading and familiarizing himself with it. This is so that he may be free from errors, copying mistakes, and substitutions, and so that he may know where to move from one chapter to another, from a

question to an answer, from one section to another, from a fundamental principle to a derivative principle or vice versa, from an exception to an illustration or a digression that is unrelated to an important principle, or to the speech of a speaker, or the question of a questioner, or the objection of an objector, or the critique of a critic.

The copyist must know what he is saying and where he is heading, separating each quote with a dividing mark that indicates its completion, and highlighting the statement of someone other than himself with a mark indicating its significance. If he does not do this, he will be like a wood-gatherer at night, not knowing when the morning will suddenly dawn on him, or the sailor in a storm who cannot tell the difference between morning or evening.

As for copying historical works, one must know the names of the kings, their sobriquets, personal names, and patronymics, especially the kings of the Persians, Turks, Khwarizmīs, and Tatars, for most of their names are foreign and cannot be ascertained except through oral transmission. The copyist, when he writes these names, must specify them by using diacritics, markings, and notes that indicate [their correct pronunciation]. The same goes for names of cities, towns, villages, fortresses, rural areas, districts, provinces, and climes. He must indicate such instances in which the spelling [of two place names] is the same but the pronunciation is different, or instances where the spelling and pronunciation are the same but the referent is different, as in the case of Marw and Marw. The first one is Marw al-Rūdh and the other is Marw al-Shāhijān. Or, for example, al-Qāhira and al-Qāhira. The first is al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya [Cairo], and the second is the fortress al-Qāhira which was built in Zawzan by Muʾayyid al-Malik, the ruler of Kirmān. If the copyist refers to al-Qāhira without distinguishing it by its place and full title, the mind of the listener will rush to al-Qāhira al-Muʿizziyya because of its unsurpassed fame.

And as for the names of men, such as ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād and ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād, the first of them is ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Abīhi, [whose father] Ziyād was the son of Sumayya, and whom Muʿāwiyya b. Abī Sufyān appointed after his father. . . . This ʿUbayd Allāh was governor of Iraq after his father until the days of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, while the second was ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Ẓabyān. Their story is similar to one of those circular arguments in logic, as ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Abīhi was killed by al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafī, who was killed by Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr, who was killed by ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Ẓabyān. If each of these two individuals is not distinguished by his grandfather and his lineage, the matter would remain confusing for the listener, insofar as he does not have a knowledge of the facts or a grasp of the historical reports. The copyist is responsible for clarifying such matters, and the same goes for the names of the Battle

Days of the Arabs . . . and other things as well. He must point out all of this, using the appropriate indications.

As for he who copies poetry, he cannot make do without the knowledge of its meters, for that will help him to copy it faithfully according to the original, as it was first copied. He must be knowledgeable about the Arabic language and about prosody so that he can determine the meter of a verse when its scansion is problematic. Thereby he may learn whether the poem is in its original form and order, or whether it contains a change in meter due to omissions or additions. After correcting it, he should recognize the correction and mark it in its place, for its alteration changes the meaning and corrupts it, diverting it from the intended meaning.

If the copyist masters these skills, correctly applies these principles, clarifies these names, traces these lineages, [he will have achieved][13] the desired objective of his learning and secretaryship. At that point, let him deploy his pen widely in copying scholarly texts, setting down prose and poetry.[14]

As a branch of secretaryship, al-Nuwayrī considered the copying of scholarly manuscripts (*naskh al-ʿulūm*) to be a specialized craft that required an understanding of a discipline's principles, conventions, and authorities before one could embark upon copying its texts. This raises the question of what, precisely, copying meant. Why should a scribe be expected to understand the subject matter of a work, rather than copying it as he found it? Even allowing for a degree of idealization in depictions of scribal practice, al-Nuwayrī's discussion suggests that copying involved more than mere replication of exemplar manuscripts. Some level of editing and mark-up was not only considered acceptable, but was expected from a good scribe.

This editing might have taken two forms. At a basic level, a master copyist was assumed to be within his rights when correcting mistakes or making small changes to material copied from an exemplar. This could be as simple as replacing a word in a poem based on a flaw in its meter, clarifying the orthography of a foreign name, or glossing an ambiguous toponym. The copyist, al-Nuwayrī says, "is responsible for clarifying such matters" so that the reader would not be led astray, and the author's intention would be preserved from the corruption of time and human error.

However, the second dimension of *naskh al-ʿulūm* is more thoroughgoing than mere correction or glossing. As al-Nuwayrī states in the beginning of the passage, the scribe must know "where to move from one chapter to another, from a question to an answer, from one section to another," and so forth. Here, he may simply be referring to the conventions of *mise-en-page* observed by different disciplines, such as drawing attention to the structural divisions in a manuscript by using different calligraphic styles, colors, text sizes, symbols, and blank space. As Maaike van Berkel has shown, the manuscripts of al-

Qalqashandī's *Dawn for the Night-Blind* feature innovations in structure and design, elements that signaled a reorientation of reading and research habits during the Mamluk period. Such elements included the use of running headers, rubrication, illumination, keywords in the margins, overlining, different calligraphic styles, spacing, tables of contents, and a very systematic organizational scheme.[15] As we see below, the autographs of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* exhibit similar codicological features: there is extensive rubrication and consistent titling practices, drawing attention to the chapter and subchapter headings, as well as changes of topic. In later manuscripts of the *Ultimate Ambition*, these features would be combined with other finding devices such as thumb indexes and elaborate margin formats.

However, al-Nuwayrī's statement that the "copyist must know what he is saying and where he is heading" indicates that there was more at stake in this practice than neatening up the page layout and highlighting elements already present in the original manuscript. Rather, the activity of the copyist likely also involved the introduction of structural elements into works that previously did not contain them, differentiating questions from answers, critiques from illustrations, chapters from subchapters, and so on and so forth.

One wonders, in fact, whether al-Nuwayrī considered the broader activity of compilation itself—which depends upon the selective quotation, embellishment, and rearrangement of older materials into new forms—to be a species of *naskh*. Translating the term *nāsikh* as "copyist" may be problematic in this regard, for what differentiates the person described in the passage above from what we would call an "editor," "anthologist," or "compiler" today? In fact, these are distinctions that are frequently difficult to draw in the world of Mamluk letters. While al-Nuwayrī clearly had a sense of the importance of maintaining the integrity of transmitted material, he saw little contradiction between this desideratum and a parallel interest in serving his contemporary audience by making manuscripts more reader-friendly.[16]

THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*'S AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPTS

Scholars of medieval texts usually regard the existence of a single preserved autograph manuscript of a given work as a stroke of good fortune. In the case of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition,* we are confronted with an embarrassment of riches. A survey of several manuscript libraries yields a list of thirty volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition* that have been attributed to al-Nuwayrī himself: Leiden University Library and the Bibliothèque nationale de France hold thirteen of these volumes; sixteen are held by various Istanbul libraries; and there is a single volume at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. Most of the Istanbul autographs were microfilmed by Aḥmad Zakī Pāshā around the turn of the twentieth century and brought to Egypt to be used as the basis for Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya's edition of the *Ultimate Ambition*, along with many other volumes copied in later centuries.

I have examined all of the Leiden and Paris manuscripts, and they contain among them what I believe to be a previously unidentified autograph (Leiden Or. 2d), as well as two manuscripts that may have been erroneously attributed to al-Nuwayrī (Leiden Or. 19b and BnF Arabe 1579, which I discuss below). As I have not had the opportunity to consult the Istanbul autographs, I have relied upon the work of other scholars, editors, and catalogers for their descriptions and attributions of these volumes to al-Nuwayrī, recognizing that a comprehensive study of all the surviving manuscripts would be necessary to confirm the authenticity of the presumed autographs. In order to facilitate such a study, I have assembled a list of the relevant manuscripts in table 5.1.

There are different types of evidence for the attribution of a manuscript to a copyist. The most direct evidence (which is not necessarily decisive) is the identification of the copyist in the manuscript itself. Other types of evidence include the copyist's handwriting, the way in which he is introduced in the work, the presence or absence of honorifics and certain prayers accompanying his signature, and the types of paper and styles of script common to the region in which the copyist lived. In al-Nuwayrī's case, the question of attribution is further complicated because of his noted skill as a copyist and his mastery of different kinds of scripts.[17]

TABLE 5.1. *ULTIMATE AMBITION* MANUSCRIPTS ATTRIBUTED TO AL-NUWAYRĪ AS COPYIST[18]

SIGLUM	LOCATION	SHELFMARK	EVIDENCE FOR ATTRIBUTION
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible][20] (Dec. 11, 1321)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[21]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[22] (April 10, 1322)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[23] (May–June 1322)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[24]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon (fragment)[25]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[26]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[27]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[28]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon likely added later[30]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[31] (Sept. 19, 1322)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[32] (Oct. 9, 1322)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon and script[33] (Jan.–Feb. 1317)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[35] (Aug. 8, 1318)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] colophon[36] (Feb. 22, 1324)

[illegible]	[illegible]	Arabic	1574
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] on and script[38]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	n/a
[illegible]	[illegible]	Arabic	1576
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] on and script[41]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] on and script[42]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] on[43]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] complete colophon[44]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	?
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] on[72]
(Dec. 6, 1325)			
[illegible]	[illegible]	Arabic	[illegible] on[47]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	later copyist[48]
(May 1326)			
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] on[49]
(Jan. 24, 1326)			
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	leaves in a different hand[50]

If we set aside for the time being the problem of authenticating autographs, what can we learn from such a large collection of manuscripts produced by a single copyist? For the purposes of studying working methods, one would ideally like to have draft copies and fair copies to compare. All of the *Ultimate Ambition* autographs that I have consulted are fair copies, with scarcely a word out of place. However, even such spotless exemplars have things to tell us about a copyist's practice and I will briefly address two issues of relevance to the case of al-Nuwayrī: composition schedule and the problem of different scripts.

Composition Schedule

As we see in table 5.1, there are two sources of evidence to consider with regard to the question of when al-Nuwayrī composed the *Ultimate Ambition*. First, there are nine manuscripts that have signed and dated colophons.[51] Second, there are five manuscripts that can be dated based on references to specific events or individuals in the text.[52] Putting the two sets of dates together, we can construct a composition timeline (see table 5.2).

Amīna Jamāl al-Dīn has suggested that al-Nuwayrī made two copies of the *Ultimate Ambition*: one begun before 1318, and another started in 1321.[53] She proposed that a single manuscript from the first set survives (DKM 554, vol. 19), while four other dated autographs belong to the purported second set and were copied within a ten-month span between 1321 and 1322 (DKM 551, vols. 1, 4, 15, and 16).[54] Table 5.2 contains several additional manuscripts that Jamāl al-Dīn was unable to consult, and they seem to substantiate her hypothesis. There is, however, the question of how to explain the earliest manuscript in the group: Leiden Or. 2i, vol. 25. This volume covers the history of the Saljūq, Khwārizmid, and Chingizid states, and there are two

places in the text where al-Nuwayrī identifies 714 AH as the year in which he is writing.[55] Could it be that this manuscript belongs to a third, even earlier set of the *Ultimate Ambition*? Or perhaps al-Nuwayrī wrote this volume before he knew where it might fit within an anticipated larger collection.

As shown in the notes to table 5.1, the colophons of both volumes of Leiden Or. 2i have blank spaces where the volume numbers would have been written, as does volume 27 of Leiden Or. 2l (see figure 5.1).[56] This suggests to me that these three volumes were in fact written at an early stage in the *Ultimate Ambition*'s compilation, before al-Nuwayrī knew how many volumes he would devote to the sections on the cosmos, the human being, the animal world, and the plant world. We have another example of this practice in the table of contents of the *Ultimate Ambition*, where al-Nuwayrī describes chapter §5.5.12, which covers the political history of Egypt "up until our composition of this work in the year seven hundred and [lacuna]" (*ilā ḥīn waḍʿinā li-hādha al-taʾlīf fī sana* [lacuna] *wa-sabʿamiʾa*).[57] Given that the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya edition of this first volume was based on the 1321 autograph, this lacuna in the text is interesting. It may suggest that al-Nuwayrī planned to go back and fill in the composition date after he finished the historical section, so as to provide an accurate *terminus ante quem* for chapter §5.5.12 in the table of contents. As it happened, al-Nuwayrī did not go back and pencil in the date, and perhaps neglected to do so in the first version of the work as well, since two later copies of the manuscript preserve the lacuna in the same spot.[58]

TABLE 5.2. A COMPILATION TIMELINE FOR AL-NUWAYRĪ'S *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

MANUSCRIPT VOLUME	
Leiden Or. 2i	21
Leiden Or. 2i	716 (Jan.–Feb. 1317)
Leiden Or. 2i	718 (Aug. 8, 1318)
Leiden Or. 2i	721 (Dec. 11, 1321)
Leiden Or. 2i	722 (April 10, 1322)
Leiden Or. 2i	722 (May–June 1322)
Leiden Or. 2i	722 (Sept. 19, 1322)
Leiden Or. 2i	722 (Oct. 9, 1322)
Leiden Or. 2i	724 (Feb. 22, 1324)
Leiden Or. 2i	725 (Dec. 6, 1325)

(Jan. 24, 1326)

(May 1326)

It is difficult, then, to establish exactly when al-Nuwayrī began compiling the *Ultimate Ambition* or the order in which he produced the volumes. The autographs suggest that he may have begun with certain volumes that he later decided to insert toward the end of the work, as his vision for it grew more ambitious. The *Ultimate Ambition*'s textual architecture and extensive cross-referencing demand that al-Nuwayrī would have had to establish the overall plan for the work before he produced his first fair copy. However, he may not have known exactly how many volumes each book, section, and chapter would encompass, even if their general order and contents were clear to him from the start.[59]

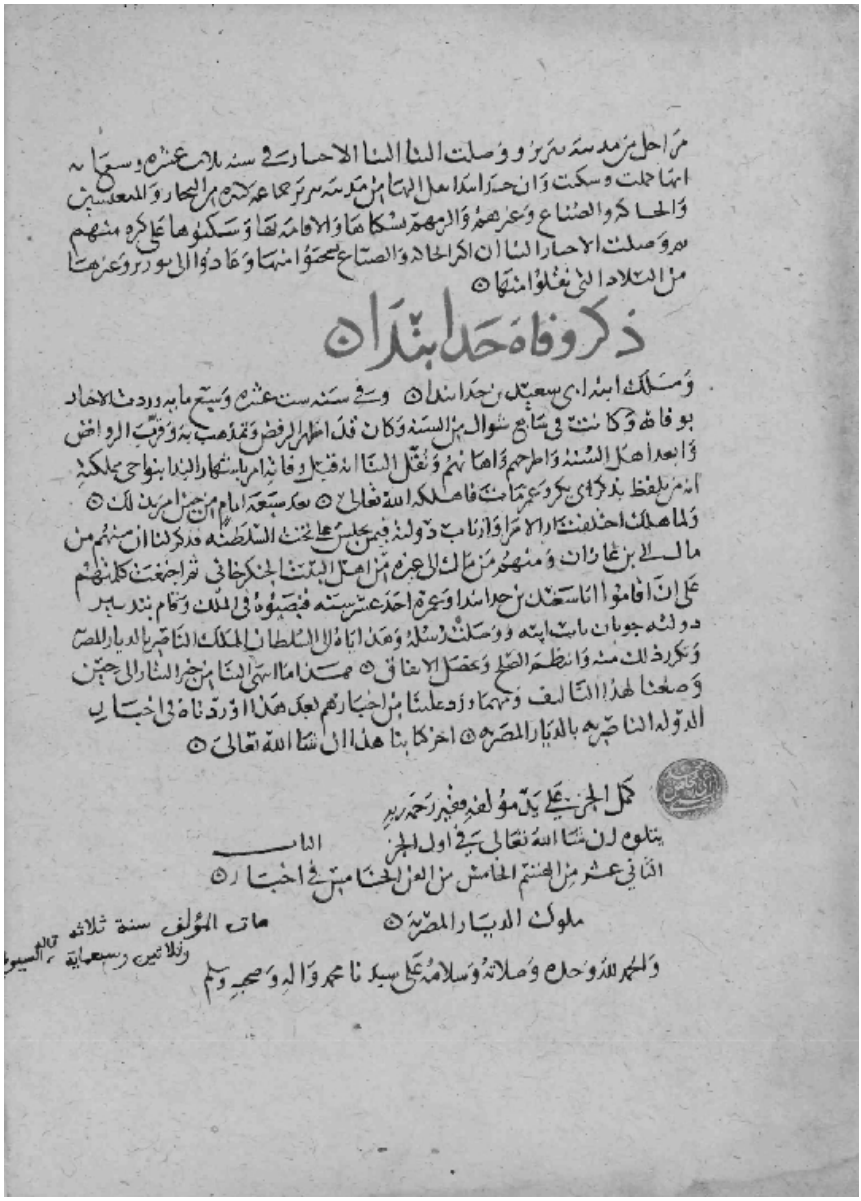


FIGURE 5.1. Colophon of an autograph copy of the *Ultimate Ambition*, volume 25. The colophon is missing the volume number, suggesting that al-Nuwayrī had not determined at this stage of his composition the final volume ordering of his work (Leiden MS Or. 2i, fol. 205b; © Leiden University, used with permission).

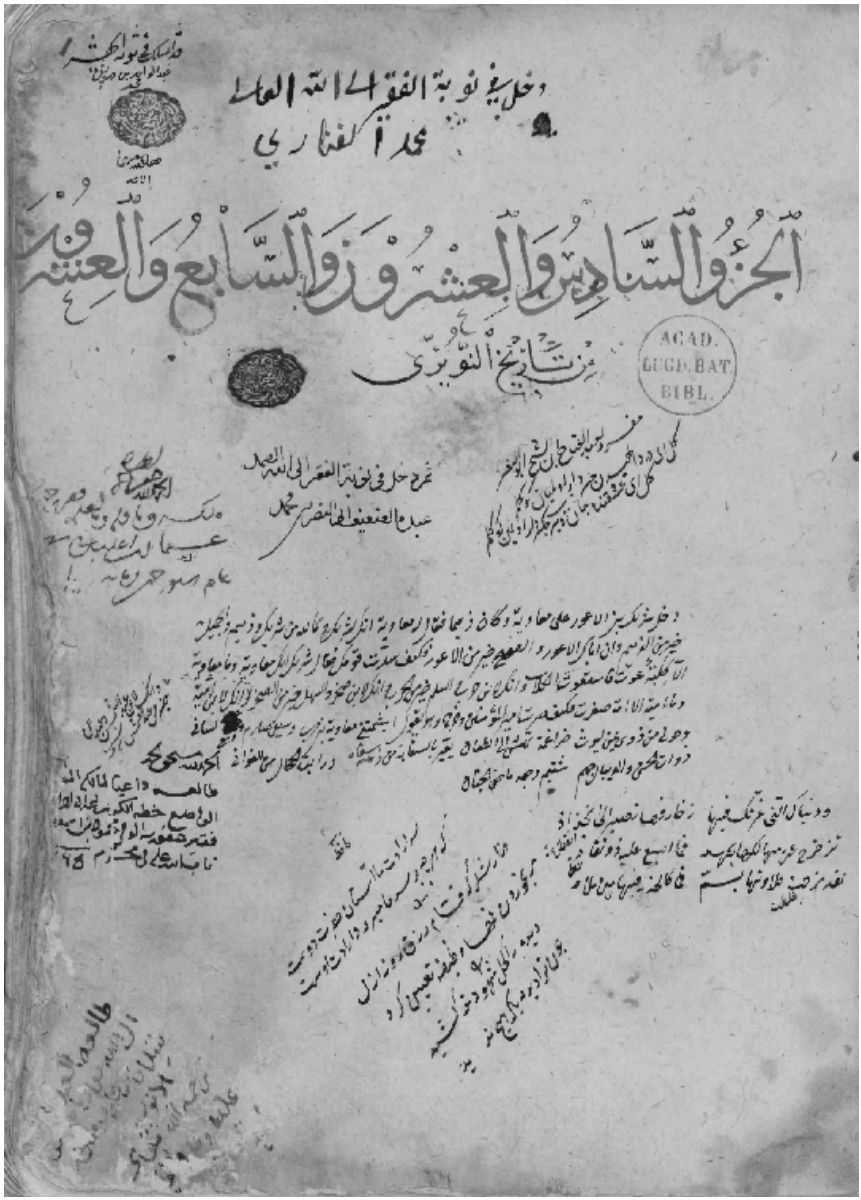


FIGURE 5.2. Title page of an autograph copy of the *Ultimate Ambition*, volume 26, with ownership statements and notes by later readers (Leiden MS Or. 2l, fol. 1a; © Leiden University, used with permission).

Calligraphic Scripts

It is often very difficult to identify a manuscript as an autograph purely on the basis of its script. Unless a copyist has a distinctive hand, one frequently finds oneself hazarding impressionistic guesses as to whether an unsigned manuscript might be an autograph. Most of the manuscripts of the *Ultimate*

Ambition that I have consulted have very similar scripts, rubrication patterns, page layouts, colophons, chapter titles, and running headers. Two volumes, however, look nothing like the others and strongly resemble each other: BnF Arabe 1579 (vol. 29) and Leiden Or. 19b (vol. 31). The former has a signed colophon identifying the copyist as al-Nuwayrī and the copy date as 18 Ṣafar 726. The latter is unsigned and was copied between 730–33 AH; it seems to have been attributed to al-Nuwayrī on the basis of a comment made in a different hand on the flyleaves of the manuscript.

As al-Nuwayrī was a master of many scripts, one might propose that the difference between Leiden Or. 19b/BnF Arabe 1579 and the other Leiden and Paris autographs was the result of a conscious decision to use a different script in his manuscript copies toward the end of his life. Al-Udfuwī remarked in his biography that al-Nuwayrī "was afflicted with pain at the end of his fingers, which was the cause of his death." Might these manuscripts reflect a debilitating condition that prevented him from producing the very fine specimens he copied a decade earlier? I would think not, given that we have a second copy of volume 29 (BnF Arabe 1578) produced at least a few months *after* BnF Arabe 1579, which is in the same hand as the other Leiden and Paris autographs. Alternatively, one might speculate that the manuscripts were produced by a different copyist and passed off as autographs, or perhaps were copied by an amanuensis.[60] Further analysis of these manuscripts and comparison with other copies of the *Ultimate Ambition* would be necessary to solve this puzzle.

AN IMPORTANT ḤADĪTH MANUSCRIPT IN AL-NUWAYRĪ'S HAND?

As his biographers inform us, al-Nuwayrī supported himself during the period in which he composed the *Ultimate Ambition* by making and selling copies of al-Bukhārī's canonical collection of Prophetic traditions, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.[61] I have found what seems to be one of these copies, a manuscript held in the Fazıl Ahmed Paşa collection at the Köprülü Manuscript Library in Istanbul (Fazıl Ahmed Paşa MS 362).[62] Dated to Jumādā I 725 (April 1325 CE), the manuscript contains 316 folios of compact script with ample marginal annotations. The title page indicates that it was commissioned for the Mamlūk sultan Qalāwūn's library.[63] This may be further evidence of the esteem in which al-Nuwayrī's manuscript copies were held; one presumes that institutional commissions were reserved for very fine copies.[64]

The value of this particular manuscript, however, may have had as much to do with the nature of its contents as the quality of the copy itself. As we learn from the final pages of the work (fol. 296b), the manuscript was copied from an exemplar that had been authorized by Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī (d. 701/1302), the older half-brother of the historian Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, whose chronicle *Dhayl mirʾāt al-zamān* was one of al-

Nuwayrī's main sources for book 5 of the *Ultimate Ambition*. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī's redaction of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was a marvel of philological scholarship, an attempt to reconstruct the original text of this canonical ḥadīth collection several centuries after it was composed. He performed this task by collating the recensions of several important transmitters and making notes of the variants he encountered, labeling them with abbreviations in the margins much like a modern critical edition.[65]

Perhaps as a result of this philological zeal, al-Yūnīnī's redaction (known as the *Yūnīniyya*) "was less suited for transmission by reading and listening" than other manuscripts of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and so his careful work was mostly neglected by later ḥadīth commentators, with the exception of al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517).[66] After al-Yūnīnī's death, his personal copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* with its precious annotations was sold, then lost, then found again, and eventually made its way to Istanbul, where it was held in an Ottoman library. According to Fuat Sezgin, the sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II sent it to Cairo in 1895–96 to be printed, after which it disappeared permanently.

In al-Nuwayrī's obituary of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī in the *Ultimate Ambition*, he states: "He concerned himself with al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in all of its channels, and he exactingly edited his own copy, giving each channel its own abbreviation, and adding correct marginal annotations. I have copied al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from his model seven times, and I edited it just as he did, and collated it against his own model, which was the model upon which I performed my audition with al-Ḥajjār and Wazīra."[67] These last two figures were al-Nuwayrī's principal teachers of ḥadīth, Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥajjār and Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ Umm Muḥammad Wazīra bt. ʿUmar al-Tanūkhī.[68] Like al-Yūnīnī, both of these teachers had studied ḥadīth with Ibn al-Zabīdī when they were young, which is why al-Nuwayrī felt he could collate the *Yūnīniyya* against the model of his own audition with al-Ḥajjār and Wazīra, as they both derived from the same source. He explains his methodology in detail in the last few pages of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* manuscript:

> I have seen the *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by the imam . . . al-Bukhārī . . . and it is the model that I heard (*samiʿtu*) and collated this copy against. It is an authentic model in two volumes, in the hand of the shaykh Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Abī al-Faḍl b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd, may God distinguish him. He copied it from the copy of al-Ḥāfiẓ Abī Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿAlī b. Surūr al-Maqdisī, may God have mercy upon him, which is held in Ḍiyāʾiyya madrasa, at the foot of Mount Qāsiyūn. It is in six volumes, and was audited by (*masmūʿa ʿalā*) the shaykh Sirāj al-Dīn Abī ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Zabīdī. The former manuscript, which I copied and collated against, was audited by the shaykh, imam, and great scholar Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿAlī, son of the shaykh and imam Taqī al-Dīn Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Yūnīnī, may God reveal

> Paradise to him. He occupied himself greatly with the collation, editing, correction, and perfection of that manuscript, such that it would become an arbiter to which one could have recourse, and a model upon which one could depend . . . I have decided to copy it in its entirety from the exemplar without forsaking, summarizing, or abbreviating any part of it. Rather, I determined to present it according to its original text.[69]

Al-Nuwayrī was careful to copy all of the reading and auditing statements at the end of the exemplar, and it seems that he took the same care in preserving al-Yūnīnī's editorial apparatus, listing variants in the margins of the text. For this reason, this manuscript would appear to deserve careful study by scholars working on the history of the transmission of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* during the medieval period. For the purposes of the present chapter, the *Yūnīniyya* manuscript represents an interesting comparandum to the autograph manuscripts of the *Ultimate Ambition*. It underscores the importance that al-Nuwayrī placed on maintaining the integrity of an exemplar in the course of copying it, as we discussed earlier, and it provides an example of how a copyist approached a work by a different author rather than his own work.

However, the *Yūnīniyya* manuscript also raises some interesting issues concerning the problems of authenticating autographs. The handwriting is very different from that of the Leiden and Paris autographs; it is much more compact and the text block has more lines per page, in addition to being uninterrupted by line breaks. This may have been due to al-Nuwayrī's desire to fit the entire work within a single volume. The exemplar had been in two volumes (and was itself based on another manuscript in six volumes), while this manuscript is squeezed into three-hundred-odd folios. On the other hand, one cannot help but note that the script is somewhat similar (again, impressionistically speaking) to that of the two problematic "autographs" of the *Ultimate Ambition,* Leiden Or. 19b and BnF Arabe 1579. Could it be that the *Yūnīniyya* and those two other manuscripts are the real autographs? Or perhaps there were amanuenses involved? Again, a broader survey of manuscripts would be necessary to settle these interesting puzzles.

CONCLUSION

In a famous treatise about education, *Reminding the Listener and Speaker on the Etiquette of the Teacher and Seeker* (*Tadhkirat al-sāmiʿ wa-l-mutakallim fī adab al-ʿālim wa-l-mutaʿallim*), the Shāfiʿī chief judge in Egypt, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333), laid out a comprehensive program for how to approach one's studies, with recommendations about appropriate clothing, dietary regimens, arranging one's books, and addressing one's teacher properly.[70] In a discussion of how to write a book, he offers his students some timeless advice: "It is best for the scholar to occupy himself with [books] that will be widely used and which are in demand. He should devote his efforts to

such books that others have not already written and should strive to make his expressions clear while avoiding tedious prolixity and indecent brevity, giving each author (*muṣannif*) his due."[71]

One of Ibn Jamāʿa's many students was al-Nuwayrī, who seemed not to heed fully his teacher's advice. Although the *Ultimate Ambition* was esteemed by many readers after al-Nuwayrī's death, its size would have made it grossly impractical for it ever to be "widely used," as Ibn Jamāʿa proposed. On the other hand, the combination of diverse materials within its pages may have been influenced in some way by Ibn Jamāʿa's encouragement of students to write new books and not merely to work as copyists of canonical materials. He writes:

> There are some people these days who reproach others for their composition of books (*al-taṣnīf wa-l-taʾlīf*) despite the recognized competence and knowledge of these authors. There is no basis for this reproach besides the competition between the generations (*al-tanāfus bayna ahl al-aʿṣār*). If one is not reproached for using his ink and paper to write what he wishes in the way of poems and licit stories and other things, then why should he be reproached and condemned for writing on beneficial matters related to the legal sciences?"[72]

Al-Nuwayrī is a rare example of a medieval author whose copying practices might be analyzed from as wide a range of perspectives as we have considered in this chapter. We have the testimony of his biographers to consider along with his own views on the education and practice of the model copyist; these textual sources alone constitute a valuable window on the production of medieval encyclopedic texts. Added to this documentary evidence, however, is the considerable codicological and paleographical evidence represented by at least thirty presumed autographs of the *Ultimate Ambition*, as well as one of several copies of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that al-Nuwayrī was known to have made. In light of this enormous cache of materials, it is difficult to think of a figure better suited to the study of working methods among large-scale compilers in the Mamluk period.

However, even with this embarassment of riches, there are many other important questions about working methods that remain open. Did al-Nuwayrī rely on helpers to copy out his sources? What archival practices did he bring to the craft of compilation from his experience in the bureaucracy? How did he manage his papers and notes? Did he draw upon his own personal library or did he depend on the book collections of other scholars? And how was the *Ultimate Ambition* itself assembled out of the copyist's matrix that he describes within its pages? These questions must be left to other scholars to ponder.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RECEPTION OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

AN INTEREST IN ORIGINS RATHER than afterlives is a bias of much historical inquiry that this book has not managed entirely to escape. Previous chapters have been concerned with questions of genesis. How and why were encyclopedic texts composed at this time? What sort of training prepared individuals like al-Nuwayrī for these endeavors and what contexts placed a value on their activity? Throughout this study, there has been little discussion of the readers, browsers, and collectors of this literature. In this final chapter, I consider the reception history of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* by way of suggesting the importance of the Mamluk encyclopedic movement in shaping the legacy of Islamic thought, as it was received in the modern world.

The study of a book's reception comprehends several questions. How was the text received by the author's contemporaries? Who bought, sold, lent, and borrowed it? Was it abridged or expanded by later authors, and did it serve as a teaching aid? Which volumes were most sought after and why? In al-Nuwayrī's case, the many manuscript volumes that made up a single copy of the *Ultimate Ambition* hold out the possibility of a wealth of data to be gleaned from copyist and ownership statements alone, to say nothing of biographical notices and quotations in later works. And moving beyond the immediate geographical and temporal context of the work's composition, other questions come to light. Was the *Ultimate Ambition* ever translated? Were there differences in the reception of the work by its many audiences? Was it of interest to non-Muslim readers? When was it first edited and printed? Who undertook the expense of its edition and why was it chosen?

Due to the fact that untold numbers of Arabic manuscripts have yet to be inventoried in libraries and private collections around the world, it is difficult to determine with confidence the scale of a work's manuscript record. And unlike the study of book history in the early modern European world, we have few opportunities to work with such evidence as the catalogs of publishers,

printers, and booksellers; our materials lie mostly outside the realm of print. In a utopia of robust catalogs and networked data, one might assemble a database of relevant manuscripts complete with information gleaned from paratextual elements—the identity of copyists and owners, prices, reading notes, audition notes, and other marginalia. Such a record would tell us a great deal about how and where the work traveled: which volumes seemed to be the most popular ones; which ended up in institutional and private libraries; what portions were studied, abridged, copied, or excised from the original. I had some ambition, when embarking upon this study, to produce such an exhaustive record for al-Nuwayrī's work, but the constraints of available bibliographical resources have taken their toll. Rather, I have relied on a mixture of codicological evidence and narrative sources to reconstruct a general picture of the reception of the *Ultimate Ambition* in both the Islamic and European worlds, from the time of the author's own life until the modern period. My hope is that this preliminary sketch will provide the basis for future exploration as new manuscripts and other types of evidence come to light.

THE ISLAMIC RECEPTION

When al-Nuwayrī died in 1333, his work had already begun to circulate among his contemporaries. As a master calligrapher who commanded very high prices for his copies of al-Bukhārī's ḥadīth collection, al-Nuwayrī was connected to an audience of wealthy bibliophiles. His biographers report that he sold a complete copy of the *Ultimate Ambition* to the polyglot vizier Ibrāhīm Jamāl al-Kufāt (d. 745/1344), a powerful administrator known for his intellectual interests.[1] Because of the size and cost of the book, it would have been beyond the means of most readers to acquire their own complete copies. Rather, in most cases a reader would have copied the volumes relevant to his or her interests, a type of selective engagement facilitated by the modularity of the work.[2]

From the preeminent historian of Mecca, Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429), we learn that there existed an abridgment of al-Nuwayrī's work, which appears to have been lost.[3] Later Mamluk historians such as Ibn al-Furāt, Ibn Khaldūn, Abū al-Fidā, al-Maqrīzī, Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, Mufaḍḍal, al-Muqrī, and Ibn Taghribirdī drew upon al-Nuwayrī's compendium in writing their own works, particularly his detailed account of the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, to which he was a personal witness.[4] In the case of Ibn Taghribirdī and some others, the dependence on al-Nuwayrī was acknowledged by the chroniclers themselves, while others such as Ibn al-Furāt reproduced large quantities of material from the *Ultimate Ambition* with no mention of the source text. It is possible that these passages can be explained by the use of common sources, but as E. Ashtor points out, it seems unlikely that Ibn al-Furāt would have been unaware of al-Nuwayrī's work.[5]

Historians were not the only scholars to draw upon the *Ultimate Ambition* during the first centuries after its composition. Al-Qalqashandī was aware of the book and cited it several times in his own scribal compendium, *Dawn of the Night-Blind*, referring to al-Nuwayrī simply as "the author of the *Nihāya*," suggesting that no further introduction was necessary for al-Qalqashandī's scribal audience.[6] On the basis of the passages quoted in *Dawn for the Night-Blind*, which included administrative as well as historical and scientific materials, it is evident that al-Qalqashandī had access to a complete copy of the *Ultimate Ambition*, and not merely the volumes related to scribal practice. Interestingly, there do not appear to be any direct references to the *Ultimate Ambition* in Ibn Faḍl Allāh's encyclopedic *Routes of Insight into the Civilized Realms*, nor in his short manual on scribal protocols. Although al-Nuwayrī had probably left the Mamluk administration by the time that Ibn Faḍl Allāh began working in the Damascus chancery in the 1320s, it is more than likely that the two men would have crossed paths in Cairo when Ibn Faḍl Allāh accompanied his father, the state secretary Muḥyī l-Dīn, to the capital and served as his assistant in the early 1330s. In any case, if al-Nuwayrī's work served as an inspiration to the younger encyclopedist, he did not acknowledge it in his own work.

In the Ottoman Empire, the *Ultimate Ambition* continued to be copied and cited. It was known to Kâtip Çelebi and exploited extensively by ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn ʿUmar al-Baghdādī (d. 1682) in his *Treasury of Literature* (*Khizānat al-adab*). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, copies of the work were produced for two different Ottoman grand viziers, Koca Ragıp Pasha and Köprülü Mehmet Pasha, and many of the manuscripts held in Egypt eventually found their way to Istanbul.[7] My survey of catalogs from some of the largest manuscript collections in Europe, North America, and the Middle East yields over one hundred extant volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition* including the autograph copies discussed in chapter 5. By comparison with most well-known medieval Arabic works, this is a modestly sized manuscript record, but it is difficult to say how many complete copies it reflects, given the work's great size.

The non-autograph manuscripts found in these archives were produced as early as four years after the author's death, and as late as the seventeenth century. They are found in different sizes and calligraphic styles, and show diverse signs of use. Some, like many of the Leiden autographs, are in pristine condition; others are covered with owners' and borrowers' notes and marginalia, indicating that they spent some time in different libraries or lending bookshops. Most of the manuscripts preserve the consultative features of al-Nuwayrī's autographs—such as extensive and consistent rubrication, running headers, and shifting margins—and some introduce new ones, like an undated manuscript in Leiden (Or. 2c) that contains bookmarks sewn into the fore-edge margin of certain pages to mark the beginnings of new sections and chapters.

One of the most remarkable extant manuscripts of the *Ultimate Ambition* is Leiden ms. Or. 273, a monumental single volume produced for a wealthy, perhaps royal, patron (figures 6.1 and 6.2). Encompassing the first fifteen volumes of the work within a single large-format volume (42.5 cm × 23 cm), the manuscript makes use of extensive paneling and multichrome ornamentation to organize the text block, with gold-bordered columns for poetry and rubricated script in the margins identifying the authors of cited passages. The paper used throughout is polished and thin, rather unlike the material found in the fourteenth-century autographs, and the only identifying trace of the copyist is an inadvertent smudge of a fingerprint in one of the margins. The ornate gold seal of the owner is too faded to read, but the identity of the purchaser is known. The manuscript was bought by Levinus Warner (1619–65 CE), probably in Istanbul, and bequeathed to Leiden as part of his legacy, discussed later in this chapter. Though we have little information about its origins, the mere existence of such an expensive and ornate monumental copy of the *Ultimate Ambition* indicates that it was a prized text during the Ottoman era.

On the other hand, it is clear that al-Nuwayrī's work was not adopted as an authoritative source on all the subjects that it encompassed. The fact that a work such as *The Life of Animals* (*Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*) by the Cairene scholar Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) did not cite the *Ultimate Ambition* among its many sources—which included the books of Ibn Faḍl Allāh and al-Qazwīnī—is significant.[8] It may suggest that the nonhistorical portions of the encyclopedia did not circulate widely until later centuries.

THE EUROPEAN RECEPTION

Some of the finest and most valuable copies of the *Ultimate Ambition* found their way to Leiden and Paris in the seventeenth century. With the improvement of economic and diplomatic relations between the Dutch Republic and the Ottoman Empire, along with the rise of Dutch navigation in the Mediterranean around the turn of the seventeenth century, the discipline of oriental studies began to flourish in the Netherlands.[9] Hebrew had been taught at the University of Leiden since its founding in 1575 and some of its most distinguished professors, such as Joseph Justus Scaliger and Franciscus Raphelengius, were interested in other Semitic languages as well.[10] The university established a separate chair in Arabic in 1599 and, after some initial missteps in filling it, the study of the language took off in 1613 with the appointment of Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624).

FIGURE 6.1. Illuminated first folio of a large-scale manuscript copy of the *Ultimate Ambition* (Leiden MS Or. 273 © Leiden University, used with permission).

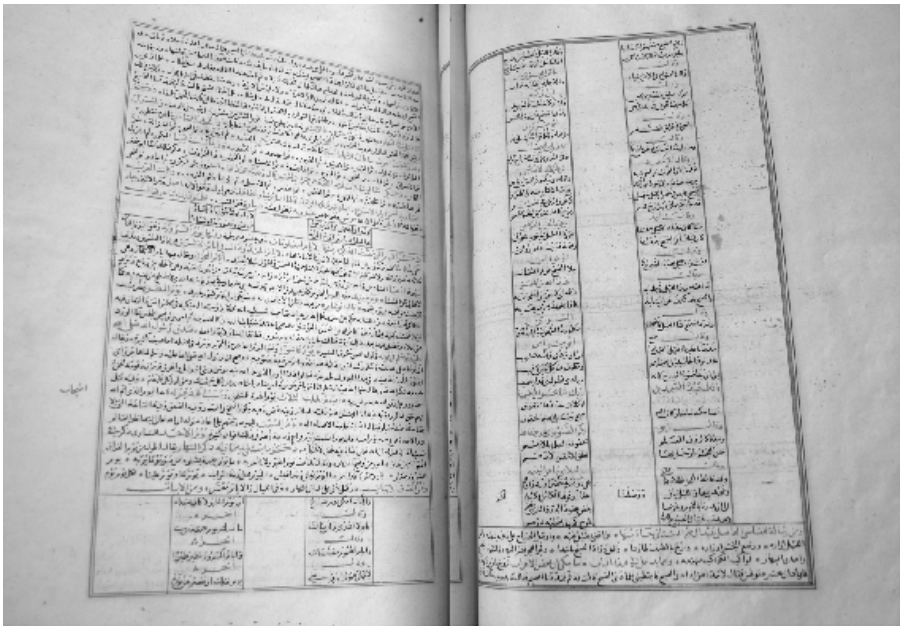


FIGURE 6.2. Rubrication and paneling in a large-scale manuscript copy of the *Ultimate Ambition* (Leiden MS Or. 273 © Leiden University, used with permission).

Erpenius had studied classical languages and Hebrew with Scaliger and went on to cobble together a self-directed education in Arabic by spending time in England, France, and Venice, seeking out Arabic books and manuscripts with which to study the language. When he returned home and took up his post at Leiden, the challenges that he had encountered in finding materials for the study of Arabic would inform his scholarly activities. Erpenius continued to collect manuscripts, edited and translated historical texts, and published them with his own printing press. Most significantly, he wrote his *Grammatica Arabica*, the first practical grammar for the study of Arabic in a European language and the standard pedagogical textbook for the next two centuries.[11]

Although al-Nuwayrī is cited in the 1656 edition of Erpenius's *Grammatica Arabica*, this would appear to have been an interpolation by Erpenius's student and successor, Jacobus Golius (1596–1667), who was responsible along with the aforementioned Levinus Warner for bringing many of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s manuscripts to Leiden during a period recognized as the golden age of Arabic studies in the Netherlands.[12] Golius was a passionate collector of Islamic manuscripts and antiquities. Through his own travels in Morocco, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, as well as his cultivation of a network of contacts in the region, he amassed a collection of three hundred Arabic, Turkish, and Persian manuscripts, the bulk of which Leiden University acquired after his death.[13] Golius's prowess as a collector earned him great renown in academic circles, prompting the Dutch poet, diplomat,

and composer Constantijn Huygens to write an admiring poem about him, celebrating the "eternal treasures" that he had brought across the seas.[14]

Golius's encyclopedic interests—which included mathematics and oriental languages, naturally, and also medicine, botany, astronomy, and history—come across in his correspondence with his Eastern contacts. About 150 of these letters are preserved in two large volumes at Leiden and the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, along with official letters from the Sublime Porte and the Moroccan sultans, legal opinions, certificates, and other types of documents.[15] As Jan Schmidt has shown in his careful studies of this collection, the letters reveal Golius to have been "a scholar of untiring energy who sought out specific texts in all sorts of specialised fields . . . in order to satisfy his boundless curiosity."[16] He edited and translated excerpts from the texts he sought, using them to compile his own works, which included a very successful Arabic-Latin dictionary.[17] One of Golius's great ambitions was to produce an appendix to the history of the Islamic world covered by the classical chronicles that he had collected. He wrote to one of his correspondents, a Damascene doctor named Yuḥannā b. Mikhāʾīl b. ʿAṭiyya, asking him to assemble a team of four people to gather as much historiographical material as they could find about the Safavids, Ottomans, Mongols, Uzbeks, and others, for the years 940–1060 AH (1533–1649 CE). The project never materialized, but Golius's vision for it suggests that his interests were not confined to the past but extended into the contemporary Islamic world.[18]

Nearly all of the volumes of al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedia that were acquired by Leiden came from Golius's collection.[19] There are precious few indications, in the studies and descriptions of his correspondence, of where these manuscripts were found, who their owners were, and why Golius requested copies of them from his correspondents. On the basis of research conducted in the Leiden City Archives, M. Houtsma was able to determine that Golius—with the help of the archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, a great collector of manuscripts—requested that the Dutch ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Cornelis Haga, acquire manuscripts for both men in Istanbul. Some of these volumes were sent back to Europe in the luggage of the English ambassador and delivered to the archbishop, who refused to give them to Golius. In the spring of 1640, they were delivered to Leiden after some diplomatic maneuvering. According to a letter from Golius dated November 13, 1640, he had paid 127 Dutch guilders for eleven volumes of al-Nuwayrī's work, which included many of the autographs discussed in chapter 5.[20]

It is evident that Golius read parts of the *Ultimate Ambition* when he eventually received it, as al-Nuwayrī is cited as a source in two of Golius's own books: an edition of the ninth-century astronomer al-Farghānī's *Elements of Astronomy and Celestial Movement* (*Jawāmiʿ ʿilm al-nujūm wa-l-ḥarakāt al-samawiyya*), with Latin translation and commentary, and his *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*.[21] Al-Nuwayrī's work, like those of Ibn al-Nadīm, Ibn

Khallikān, al-Damīrī, and al-Qazwīnī, was one of the many classical texts that Golius drew upon to help explicate the linguistic and historical puzzles he found in the works he studied.

Golius died in 1667, two years after the death of his brilliant student, Levinus Warner, who surpassed his teacher in the size of his great bequest of one thousand manuscripts to Leiden.[22] Warner left Holland for Turkey in 1644 at the age of twenty-five and remained there until his death. Within a few years of his arrival, Leiden University invited him back with the offer of a professorship in Hebrew but Warner decided to remain abroad, eventually becoming a diplomatic representative of the States General to the Sublime Porte.[23] While some local Dutch merchants complained that he cared more about scholarship than his professional duties, Warner's diplomatic career had its share of political drama.[24] Like Golius, he was very interested in the topic of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and his own network of contacts throughout the empire was even more extensive than that of his teacher. The enormous collection of manuscripts that he assembled included works purchased from the estate of the bibliographer Kâtip Çelebi. As in the case of Golius's collection, however, we do not know where Warner set his hands on the copy of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* that he eventually bequeathed to Leiden, but the size and quality of the copy suggest that it must have been a hugely expensive acquisition.[25]

After the deaths of Warner and Golius, Leiden University found itself with one of the greatest collections of Islamic manuscripts ever assembled in Europe but no one there to study it. This situation persisted for forty-three years, until Leiden appointed a Dutch pastor named Johannes Heyman (1667–1737) to Golius's chair in 1710. Heyman had been educated as a minister at Herborn and went to Izmir in 1705 to serve as the Protestant chaplain to the community of Dutch traders there.[26] Like Golius and Warner, he traveled around the Levant with the aim of improving his languages and knowledge of the region. In 1707, through the intercession of the famous Dutch philologist and politician Gisbertus Cuper—with whom Heyman had carried on an extensive correspondence about the Sabbatian movement in Turkey—Heyman was invited by Leiden University to take up the task of translating some of the most important manuscripts in the Warner legacy.[27] The *Ultimate Ambition* would be his first great challenge. It was also, perhaps, the source of his downfall.

On the 24th of March, 1710, Heyman stood before a distinguished audience of Leiden's scholars in the Great Auditorium, flushed with the glory of his achievement. A humble pastor had been summoned to fill a distinguished position that had remained vacant for over four decades. Heyman rose before the assembled scholars and began to read his inaugural address:

Magnificent chancellor, most illustrious and noble curators of the

> Academy, most distinguished praetor, consuls, judges, and senators of the Republic of Leiden, and you who by office are privy to their counsels and secrets, most brilliant professors, splendid luminaries of this lecture hall, reverend, most eloquent ministers of the holy word, most worthy readers, most learned instructors of every profession and body of knowledge, all you most respectable men of every order who are present, citizens and guests, and you, most noble crown of the studious youth, hope of the fatherland and church, ornament and delight of teachers. After various turns of fortune and various critical moments in affairs, at last, from foreign travel, from diseases, not unbidden do I come into your most distinguished and by far most pleasant presence, as it were, out of storm into port.[28]

The subject of Heyman's inaugural lecture was the history of the oriental languages and their value for the study of many disciplines, foremost among them comparative theology. He approached his theme by way of an exploration of one of the seminal debates of Renaissance and Enlightenment intellectual history, namely the question of what language was spoken by humankind before the Great Flood and the confusion of tongues. The prevalent opinion at this time was that this language was Hebrew, however many scholars had begun to question this view. Heyman was among the breakaways, arguing that "it was not Hebrew, nor Syriac, nor Arabic, nor any other Oriental language" that was spoken by Adam and Eve, as these were merely descendants of the primordial language that had evolved through "changes, additions, subtractions, transpositions and pronunciation."[29] The original language, Heyman proposed, "cannot now be identified in a distinct manner, and instead . . . lurks in the dialects that have sprung from it."[30] Only by studying these languages as a single family could scholars improve their comprehension of the Bible, clearing away the heresies and "absurd bouts of delirium in the form of the Roman church," to say nothing of the "pestilential subterfuge" of Islam.[31]

Heyman's interests in Arabic were not just theological. Like many orientalists before and after him, he regarded Arabic as the key to unlocking an intellectual treasure to which Europe was entitled "by hereditary right," a legacy that spanned philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics, medicine, chemistry, poetry, history, and disciplines that Europe could not even imagine. He impressed upon his audience that Arabic was "highly cultivated, magnificent, endlessly rich in expression, a language that has an empire in the world, so to speak, divided with Latin," which offered Christian scholars a way to understand not just the East but Europe itself:[32]

> From the Arabs' historiography the defects of our histories can be made good and the tenets and religions of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Persians, Syrians and Indians can be known. Even the history of Christianity itself in the East, its heresies, their refutations, its liturgies, homilies, the decrees

of its synods, and more things of this sort are revealed. Many books of the Church Fathers and many books of the Roman religion have been translated into Arabic idiom. Arabic coins, neglected up to this point, can ornament treasuries . . . Geography, no less—the right hand of history—and astronomy can be illustrated from Arabic literature, and regions may be traversed which our men have not trod. In short, Mother Nature herself desires to be scrutinized from Arabic's perspective: the names and properties of minerals, trees, plants, flowers, aromas, quadrupeds, winged creatures, and other living things may be learned from it. I therefore conclude that every sort of intellectual pursuit may be greatly augmented by the study of Arabic.[33]

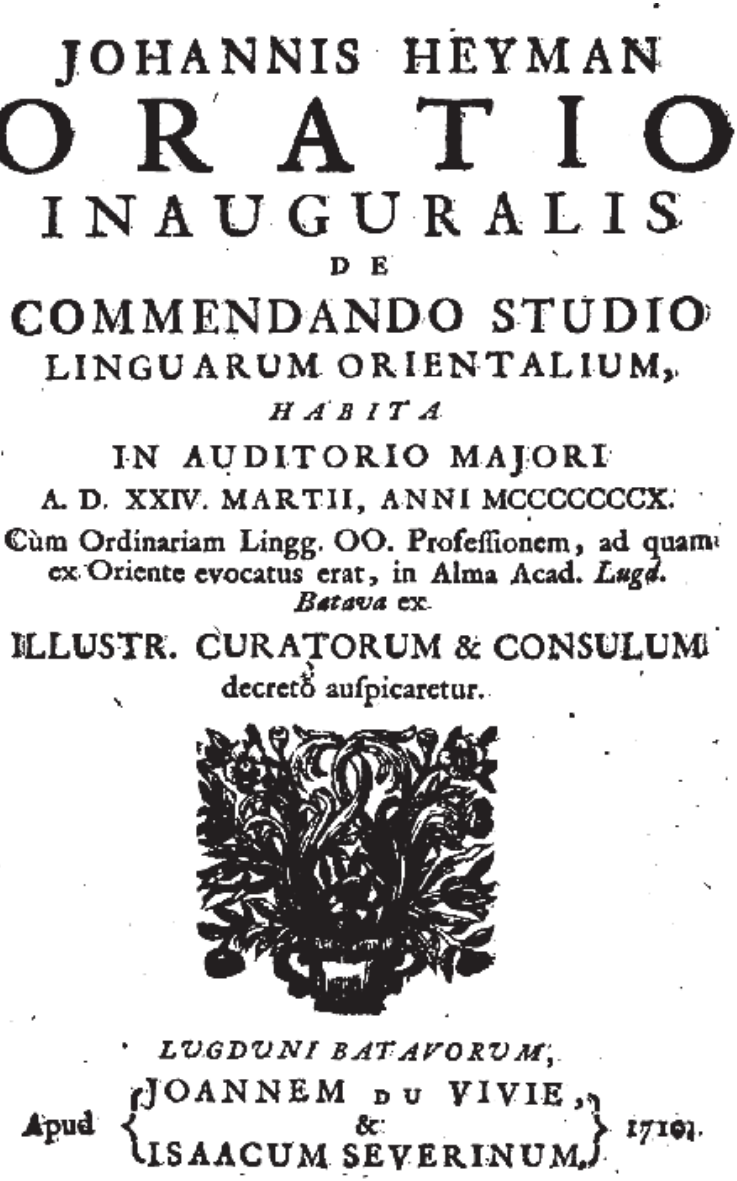

JOHANNIS HEYMAN
ORATIO
INAUGURALIS
DE
COMMENDANDO STUDIO
LINGUARUM ORIENTALIUM,
HABITA
IN AUDITORIO MAJORI
A. D. XXIV. MARTII, ANNI MCCCCCCCX.
Cùm Ordinariam Lingg. OO. Professionem, ad quam ex Oriente evocatus erat, in Alma Acad. *Lugd. Batava* ex
ILLUSTR. CURATORUM & CONSULUM
decretò auspicaretur.
LUGDUNI BATAVORUM,
Apud JOANNEM DU VIVIE, & ISAACUM SEVERINUM, 1710.

FIGURE 6.3. Title page of Johannes Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis de commendando studio Linguarum Orientalium* (1710).

In light of the treasures that Heyman saw in the promise of Arabic texts, it is not surprising that he should have begun working his way through the Legatum Warnerianum by choosing to edit and translate al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition*. While earlier scholars like Golius and Warner had drawn upon al-Nuwayrī's text in the course of their work on other materials, Heyman

was the first to make an extensive study of the *Ultimate Ambition*, which he titled *Nowairiana*, but never completed. What exists of Heyman's work on the *Ultimate Ambition* are his hand-written notes, preserved at Leiden in the form of two volumes of loose quires. The first volume (Or. 1393) contains a mixture of descriptive notes about the work's contents and a transcription of the beginning of the fifth book on history (from §5.1.1 to §5.3.1.) Based on the arrangement of the transcription—which included a wide margin filled with annotations in Latin—Heyman appeared to be preparing an edition of those excerpts from the *Ultimate Ambition* that dealt with Biblical history (see figure 6.4).

The next volume of Heyman's *Nowairiana* contains handwritten translations into Latin of selections from the *Ultimate Ambition*. His concern, again, focused on comparative theological matters, and there is some evidence that Heyman used al-Nuwayrī's work as the basis for a course that he taught at Leiden about Islamic history and theology, a kind of apologia for the Christian faith.[34] But the translations and edition were never published, nor did Heyman produce much else during his tenure in Leiden. Six volumes of his catalog of the Leiden collection are preserved—in his own script, like the *Nowairiana*—having only published the index, which the great nineteenth-century orientalist R. Dozy judged to be useless.[35] Although it must have been daunting to follow in the footsteps of Golius and Warner, Heyman's scholarly output did not come close to measuring up to the expectations of his institution, and as a result he has not been treated very kindly by posterity.[36]

Heyman died in 1737 and was replaced in his position by the great Dutch philologist Albert Schultens (1686–1750), who had effectively taken over the Leiden collection several years earlier due to Heyman's ill health. Schultens's principal research concerned the history of language and the use of comparative philology for the study of scripture. He considered the oriental languages to be sister dialects of the antediluvian language, and opposed the notion held by other scholars that Hebrew was itself that language. This was not a new idea; Heyman himself had affirmed this point in his 1710 inaugural address in Leiden. But Schultens went further in theorizing that certain ancient varieties of Arabic—such as the one spoken by the Yemeni descendants of Qaḥṭān, the legendary forefather of the Arabs—represented a pure form of the language that had not been corrupted by contact with Byzantines and Berbers and Persians. For this reason, he thought Arabic might preserve certain forms of the antediluvian langauge that Hebrew had lost.[37] Following in Heyman's footsteps, Schultens turned to al-Nuwayrī's accounts of pre-Islamic history for elucidation on this score, but he was more successful than his predecessor in editing and publishing this material (figure 6.5).[38]

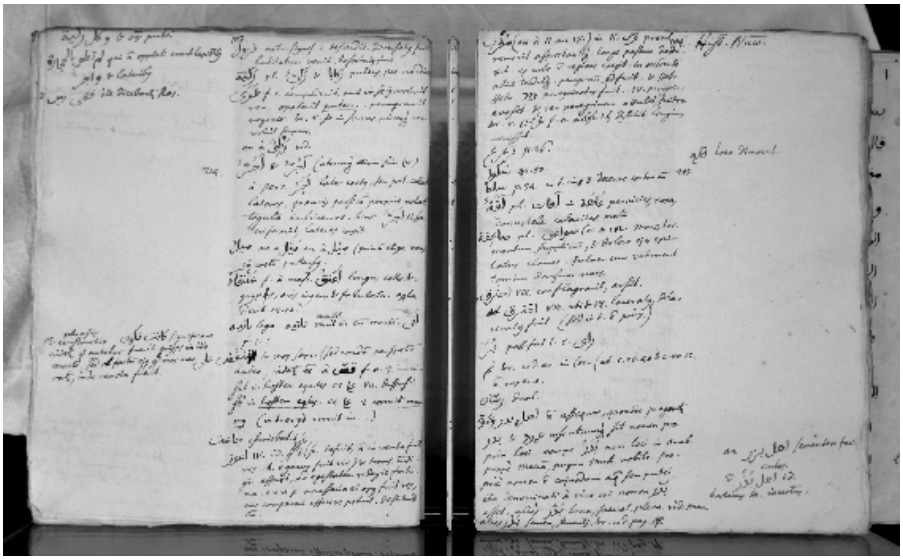
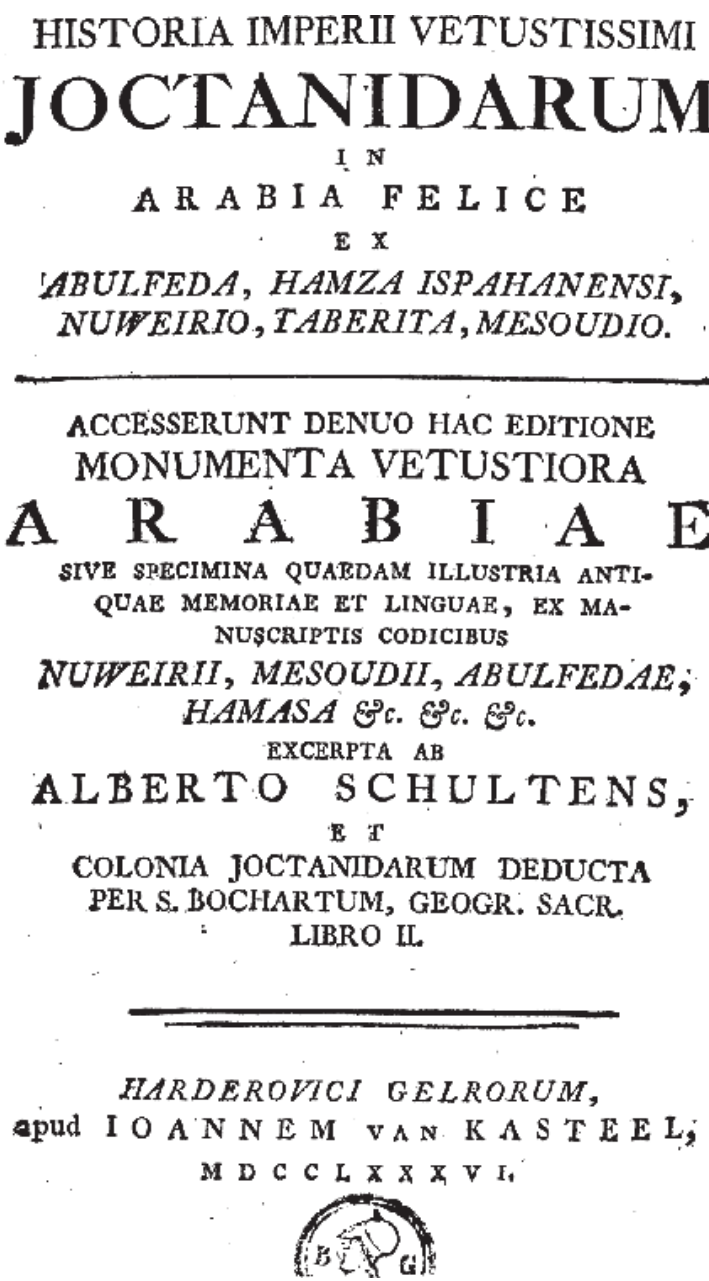


FIGURE 6.4. Leaves from Johannes Heyman, *Nowairiana* (Leiden MS Or. 1393; © Leiden University, used with permission).

Beyond Leiden, al-Nuwayrī's work attracted further attention in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was known to French orientalists as early as the mid-seventeenth century.[39] Barthélemy d'Herbelot (1625–95) devoted an entry to al-Nuwayrī in his great reference work, the *Bibliothèque Orientale* and drew upon him as a source for other topics.[40] For most European orientalists, the *Ultimate Ambition* was essentially a reference work, which they mined for information about different episodes in Islamic history. Perhaps the most systematic use of the work in this regard was undertaken by the orientalist and lexicographer Reinhart Dozy (1820–83), who cited the *Ultimate Ambition* over two hundred times in his indispensable dictionary, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, drawing on it to provide definitions of rare Arabic words not found in the standard classical lexicons.

One of the most interesting episodes in the European reception of al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition*, testifying to the longevity of this scholarship and its obssessions, is found in the work of Johann David Michaelis, a professor at the University of Göttingen and one of the most important scholars of Semitic philology in late eighteenth-century Europe. He had been influenced by the scholarship of Albert Schultens and especially his theory—informed by the *Ultimate Ambition*—that Arabia Felix was a museum of the Arabic language, preserving intact some pure descendant of the primeval language.[41] Michaelis sought to explore this idea through what would become the fascinating and ill-fated Royal Danish Arabia Expedition (1761–67), whose sole survivor was the cartographer Carsten Niebuhr. In preparing for the expedition, Michaelis put out a call for "questions" from Europe's scholars that might guide the explorers' investigations in Arabia. By the time that the

expedition set out, only a handful of questions had been received, so Michaelis supplemented them with dozens of his own queries, bound them into a single volume, and presented them to the travelers.[42]



HISTORIA IMPERII VETUSTISSIMI

JOCTANIDARUM

IN

ARABIA FELICE

EX

ABULFEDA, HAMZA ISPAHANENSI, NUWEIRIO, TABERITA, MESOUDIO.

ACCESSERUNT DENUO HAC EDITIONE

MONUMENTA VETUSTIORA

ARABIAE

SIVE SPECIMINA QUAEDAM ILLUSTRIA ANTIQUAE MEMORIAE ET LINGUAE, EX MANUSCRIPTIS CODICIBUS

NUWEIRII, MESOUDII, ABULFEDAE, HAMASA &c. &c. &c.

EXCERPTA AB

ALBERTO SCHULTENS,

ET

COLONIA JOCTANIDARUM DEDUCTA PER S. BOCHARTUM, GEOGR. SACR. LIBRO II.

HARDEROVICI GELRORUM,

apud IOANNEM VAN KASTEEL,

MDCCLXXXVI.

FIGURE 6.5. Title page of Albert Schultens, *Historia imperii vetustissimi Joctanidarum in Arabia felice ex Abulfeda, Hamza Ispahanensi, Nuweirio, Taberita, Mesoudio* (1786).

This collection, later published as *Questions Directed to a Company of*

Scholars on a Journey to Arabia by Order of His Majesty the King of Denmark, comprised a list of queries on subjects as eclectic and peculiar as "the tidal movements in northern reaches of the Red Sea, leprosy, the medicinal use of dill, the various sorts of Arab manna, the occurrence of gold and other precious metals in Arabia, the usefulness of circumcision, marriage customs, the venom of serpents, the maladies of wheat, and unclean animals and birds."[43] While it is not evident that Michaelis was familiar with the parts of the *Ultimate Ambition* that he hadn't already consulted in Schultens's translations, his list of *Questions* has a similar tenor to the annotations and queries found in the notebooks of Heyman and other European readers of Islamic encyclopedic works. Like their projects, Michaelis's endeavor was motivated by a desire to make sense of the East through its texts. And like Heyman's effort, the expedition resulted in an expensive failure.

EPILOGUE

Surveying this history of the reception of the *Ultimate Ambition*, one is struck by the range of engagements with the text and the different interests underlying them. From the most text-bound of concerns in Dozy's philological investigations to the linguistic theories of Schultens and Michaelis, which motivated a real-world expenditure of capital, time, and human life in the pursuit of knowledge, the reception of the Mamluk encyclopedic legacy represents an intellectual history that could be the subject of a book all to itself. I have only scratched the surface by exploring some of the afterlives of a single work; a more comprehensive approach would tell us a great deal not just about the history of Islamic encyclopedism, but also about what might be called the "history of the history of Islamic encyclopedism," if that is not too cumbersome a formula.[44]

In the nineteenth century, the *Ultimate Ambition* and other Mamluk encyclopedic works came to be seen by many orientalists as having less significance for historical scholarship than the works that they anthologized and synthesized.[45] This coincided with an approach to the study of Islamic history, discussed in chapter 1, that regarded the several centuries following the Mongol conquests as an age of decadence and decline. As Edward Elbridge Salisbury put it in a 1843 essay on classical Arabic literature:

> Among the causes of the decline of poetry after the dethronement of the Khalîfs of Bagdâd, were the foreign and barbarous extraction of the princes of the empire, whose literary standard, so far as they had taste sufficient to recognize any, was at variance with the native genius, and the slavish reiteration of the thoughts and imagery of earlier poets, consequent upon the dying down of genial fancy. A corrupt taste favored quibbling refinements of expression, the artifices of alliteration, and a forced appearance of novelty . . . When the Khalîfs of Bagdâd were dethroned,

and the Tartar nations had begun their inroads, the bloom of all Arabic literature passed away; the creative period was at an end. Literary activity confined itself almost entirely to rhetorical criticism, compendium-writing and commentary.[46]

This view held sway through the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth as well.[47] Reynold Nicholson suggested, based on an admittedly "very desultory and imperfect acquaintance" with the poets of the Mamluk age, that while "it would be premature to assert that none of them rises above mediocrity . . . the best among them are merely elegant and accomplished artists, playing brilliantly with words and phrases, but doing little else."[48] Ignaz Goldziher argued that Arabic-Islamic civilization, beginning in the thirteenth century bore the "infallible marks of decadence since the abundant and extensive literary production could boast very few innovating creative works."[49] Hamilton Gibb drew a connection between political emasculation and literary production: "the output was enormous throughout, but the qualities of originality, virility, and imagination, weak from the first, die away completely by the sixteenth century."[50]

As jarring as the arguments from decadence sound to our ears today, they comprise just one approach in the "history of the history of Islamic encyclopedism," which may be contrasted with the engagements of Golius, Heyman, Warner, Schultens, D'Herbelot, Hammer-Purgstall, and others who regarded the Islamic encyclopedic legacy as one of vitality and intellectual profundity. This is to say nothing of the modern Arab and Islamic receptions of these texts, particularly in the modern period, which represent yet another book that must be written by someone else.[51]

Around the turn of the twentieth century, around the time when Nicholson wrote that to dwell on the Arabic literature of the late medieval period "would only be to emphasize its scholastic and unoriginal character," an enterprising scholar in Egypt was working on a project to bring these texts to a modern audience.[52] Aḥmad Zakī Pāshā (1867–1934) was a bureaucrat of Moroccan and Kurdish origin who was first hired by the Egyptian government as a translator but rose in stature until he was appointed secretary-general of the Egyptian cabinet. Over the course of his career, he would champion the cause of revivifying the Arabic-Islamic intellectual heritage through his endeavors in manuscript collecting, fundraising, editing, and publishing.

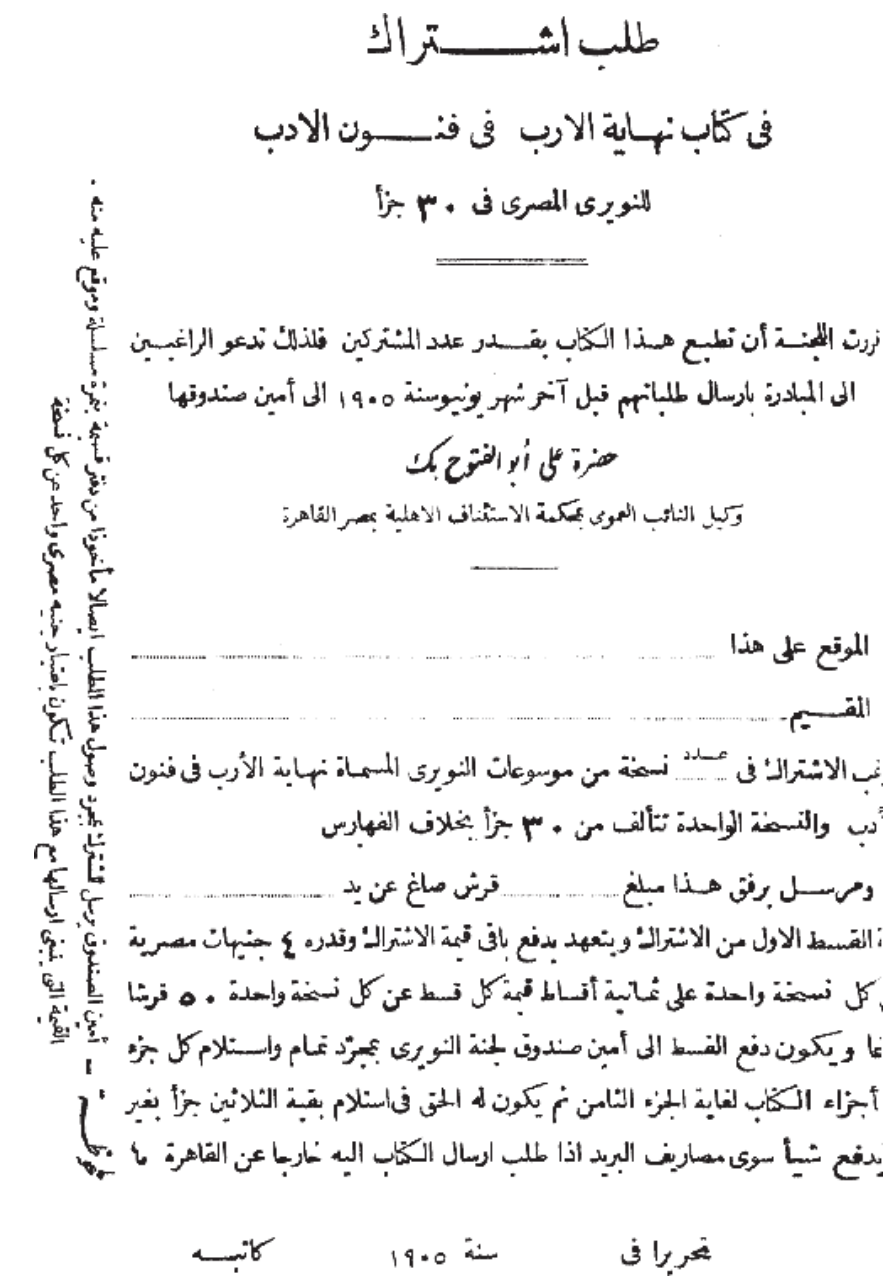
As Ahmed El Shamsy has shown, one of Zakī's main interests was the Islamic encyclopedic tradition, and particularly the works of al-Nuwayrī and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī. His efforts to track down manuscripts of both works were initially unsuccessful. In 1905, he established a government program to collect al-Nuwayrī's work, describing the effort in a pamphlet entitled *The Project to Print the Largest Arabic Egyptian Encyclopedia*.[53] By this time, Zakī had found two volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition*, and he hoped to raise funds through a public subscription program for the edition and publication of

the full text (figure 6.6). The estimated cost of the finished work would be five Egyptian pounds, which, though it represented a huge sum at the time—El Shamsy points out that "one could buy an acre of prime agricultural land for seven pounds"—it was probably still less than the price that Jamāl al-Kufāt paid for an autograph copy of the work during al-Nuwayrī's lifetime, but more than what Golius paid for eleven volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition* in 1639.[54]

The subscription program did not raise enough money, and Zakī had at any rate not yet located enough suitable manuscripts for the edition. In 1909, he visited Istanbul and somehow managed to gain access to the Topkapı Palace libraries, a breakthrough in his book-collecting enterprise. There he located a complete set of Ibn Faḍl Allāh's *Routes of Insight* and many more valuable manuscripts, which he would later persuade the Egyptian government to publish through a state-sponsored initiative called "The Revival of Arabic Letters" (*Iḥyāʾ al-Ādāb al-ʿArabiyya*). With a budget of nine thousand Egyptian pounds, the program committed itself to publishing twenty-seven classical works photographed by Zakī in Istanbul and other libraries.

Zakī's efforts set in motion a grinding process that would outlive him by many decades. The first seven volumes of the *Ultimate Ambition* appeared before his death in 1934; the final volume would not be published in 1997, although it seems that this delay was partly the result of mismanagement by later administrators. By that time, of course, the world of Arabic publishing had been transformed in ways that would be inconceivable to Zakī. The Arabic-Islamic literary and intellectual heritage that he had gone hunting for in foreign libraries was "repatriated" over the course of the twentieth century, a process that continues today in its digital form.

When I first began work on al-Nuwayrī's book in graduate school, one of my mentors—a historian of early modern Europe—asked me how I would go about gaining access to the *Ultimate Ambition* in order to study it. Would I spend months in Leiden or Paris poring over the manuscripts of the work, making notes and transcribing sections of it for later study? I replied that I had a published copy of the work on my bookshelf at home. My professor was surprised: how had I gotten hold of my own copy? Were they not exceedingly rare and expensive, as an equivalent medieval or early modern European encyclopedia would be? It occurred to me then for the first time, but not the last, that I had taken for granted the widespread availability of classical Islamic works in the modern bookstores of my native Beirut. That legacy remains urgent and vital, continuing to spur engagements by readers, translators, and scholars. In a way, al-Nuwayrī's audience has never been larger than it is today.



طلب اشـــــتراك

فى كتاب نهـاية الارب فى فنـــــون الادب

للنويرى المصرى فى ٣٠ جزأ

قررت اللجنـة أن تطبـع هـذا الكتاب بقـــدر عدد المشتركين فلذلك تدعو الراغبـين
الى المبادرة بارسال طلباتهم قبل آخر شهر يونيوسنة ١٩٠٥ الى أمين صندوقها

حضرة على أبو الفتوح بك

وكيل النائب العمومى بمحكمة الاستئناف الاهلية بمصر القاهرة

الموقع على هذا .....

المقـــيم .....

يرغب الاشتراك فى عـدد ..... نسخة من موسوعات النويرى المسماة نهاية الأرب فى فنون
الأدب والنسخة الواحدة تتألف من ٣٠ جزأ بخلاف الفهارس

ومرســـل برفق هـذا مبلغ ..... قرش صاغ عن يد .....
ة القسط الاول من الاشتراك ويتعهد بدفع باقى قيمة الاشتراك وقدره ٤ جنيهات مصرية
كل نسخة واحدة على ثمانية أقساط قيمة كل قسط عن كل نسخة واحدة ٥٠ قرشا
عا ويكون دفع القسط الى أمين صندوق لجنة النويرى بمجرّد تمام واســتلام كل جزء
أجزاء الكتاب لغاية الجزء الثامن ثم يكون له الحق فى استلام بقية الثلاثين جزأ بغير
يدفع شيأ سوى مصاريف البريد اذا طلب ارسال الكتاب اليه خارجا عن القاهرة ما

تحريرا فى ..... سنة ١٩٠٥ ..... كاتبـــه

ملحوظة — أمين الصندوق يرسل للمشترك بمجرد وصول هذا الطلب اليه مأخوذا من دفتر قسيمة بنمرة مسلسلة ومختوم عليه منه
القيمة التى ينبغى ارسالها مع هذا الطلب تكون باعتبار جنيه مصرى واحد عن كل نسخة

FIGURE 6.6. Subscription application for the modern Egyptian project to edit and publish al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition* (in Aḥmad Zakī, *Mashrūʿṭabʿ akbar mawsūʿāt ʿarabiyya miṣriyya*, 33).

APPENDIX A

THE CONTENTS OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

THIS APPENDIX CONTAINS A TRANSLATION of the table of contents from al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition*. The outline format used below is meant to facilitate consultation. In the extant manuscripts that I have consulted, the table of contents is presented as a uniform text block without shifting margins or numerical abbreviations. As discussed in chapter 2, al-Nuwayrī's work is composed of five principal books, each of which is divided into five sections, which are further differentiated into multiple chapters and subchapters. Detailed though the following table may appear to be, it provides only a glimpse of the complete contents of the *Ultimate Ambition*, because al-Nuwayrī listed the titles of only the three uppermost levels of his book's hierarchy.

1.0.
THE FIRST BOOK, ON THE HEAVENS AND THE METEOROLOGICAL PHENOMENA AND THE EARTH AND THE LOWERMOST LOCALITIES
1.1.
On the heavens and what they contain
1.1.1.
On the creation of the heavens
1.1.2.
On the structure of the heavens
1.1.3.
On the angels
1.1.4.
On the seven planets
1.1.5.
On the fixed stars
1.2.
On the meteorological phenomena
1.2.1.
On clouds and the reason for their occurrence, and on snow and hail
1.2.2.

On shooting stars, thunderbolts, thunder, and lightning
1.2.3.
On the element of wind
1.2.4.
On the element of fire, and its names
1.3.
On the nights, days, months, years, natural seasons, festivals, and holidays
1.3.1.
On the nights and days
1.3.2.
On the months and years
1.3.3.
On the natural seasons
1.3.4.
On the festivals and holidays
1.4.
On the earth, mountains, seas, islands, rivers, and springs
1.4.1.
On the creation of the earth
1.4.2.
On the classification of the names of the earth
1.4.3.
On the size of the earth and its area
1.4.4.
On the seven climes
1.4.5.
On the mountains
1.4.6.
On the seas and the islands
1.4.7.
On the rivers, streams, and springs
1.5.
On the physical qualities of the geographic localities, and the dispositions of their inhabitants, their attributes, ancient buildings, fortresses, palaces, and dwellings
1.5.1.
On the physical qualities of the geographic localities and the dispositions of their inhabitants
1.5.2.
On the attributes of the territories
1.5.3.
On ancient buildings
1.5.4.
On descriptions of fortresses
1.5.5.
On descriptions of palaces and dwellings

2.0.
THE SECOND BOOK, ON THE HUMAN BEING
2.1.
On the etymology of the word “human” (*insān*), and on the life stages and natures of the human being; and on the description and similes of his body parts; and on love poetry, erotic preludes, love, passion, desire; and genealogy

2.1.1.
On the etymology, naming, life stages, and nature of the human being
2.1.2.
On the descriptions and similes of the human being's body parts. And among what is described is: sweetness of breath; good speech and voice quality; erectness of posture; and the manner in which women walk
2.1.3.
On amorous and erotic poetry, desire, love, and passion
2.1.4.
On genealogy
2.2.
On the famous stories about the Prophet and the Companions; the well-known proverbs of the pre-Islamic Arabs and their superstitious practices; the stories of the soothsayers, omens and ornithomancy, physiognomy, induction, euphemisms and metonymies, allusion, enigmas, and riddles
2.2.1.
On stories and proverbs
2.2.2.
On the superstitious practices of the pre-Islamic Arabs
2.2.3.
On the stories of the soothsayers, omens and ornithomancy, physiognomy, and induction
2.2.4.
On euphemisms and metonymies, and allusions
2.2.5.
On enigmas and riddles
2.3.
On praise, invective, entertaining anecdotes, jests, wine, drinking together, drinking companions, female singing slaves, and the description of musical instruments
2.3.1.
On praise, comprising thirteen divisions[1]
2.3.1.1.
On the truth about praise
2.3.1.2.
On what has been said about munificence and generosity and stories of generous people
2.3.1.3.
On what has been said about giving before being asked
2.3.1.4.
On what has been said about bravery, forbearance, and daring
2.3.1.5.
On what has been said about possessing an abundance of reason
2.3.1.6.
On what has been said about honesty
2.3.1.7.
On what has been said about fidelity
2.3.1.8.
On what has been said about humbleness
2.3.1.9.
On what has been said about contentment with little and purity

2.3.1.10.
On what has been said about thanks and praise
2.3.1.11.
On what has been said about the oath and its fulfillment
2.3.1.12.
On what has been said about intercession
2.3.1.13.
On what has been said about apology and entreaty
2.3.2.
On invective, comprising fourteen divisions
2.3.2.1.
On what has been said about invective and who deserves it
2.3.2.2.
On what has been said about envy
2.3.2.3.
On what has been said about slander and injustice
2.3.2.4.
On what has been said about calumny and defamation
2.3.2.5.
On what has been said about avarice and meanness, and stories about misers and their justifications
2.3.2.6.
On what has been said about coming uninvited to dinner, and connected with this are the stories of the eaters and eating together
2.3.2.7.
On what has been said about cowardice and flight
2.3.2.8.
On what has been said about stupidity and ignorance
2.3.2.9.
On what has been said about lying
2.3.2.10.
On what has been said about betrayal
2.3.2.11.
On what has been said about arrogance and pride
2.3.2.12.
On what has been said about greed
2.3.2.13.
On what has been said about promising and deferring
2.3.2.14.
On what has been said about the inability to express oneself clearly
2.3.3.
On entertaining anecdotes and jests
2.3.4.
On wine and its prohibition, afflictions, crimes, and names. And on the stories of those who abstained from it before the advent of Islam, and those among the nobles who were punished for consuming it, on those who were famous for drinking wine, and behaved dissolutely in public because of it. And on the good poetry declaimed about it, and the descriptions of its instruments and vessels, and what has been said about pursuing pleasure, and descriptions of the drinking soirées, and other things along these lines

2.3.5.
On boon companions and cup-bearers
2.3.6.
On singing and listening to music, and what has been said about singing by way of censure and permission, and who listened to singing among the Companions, Successors, Imams, the pious worshippers, and ascetics. And on the caliphs who sang and their offspring. And on the nobles and leaders who sang. And on the stories of those singers by whom singing was translated from Persian to Arabic
2.3.7.
On what the singer needs, and must know. And on what has been said about singing, and on the descriptions of female singing slaves, and on the descriptions of musical instruments

2.4.
On congratulations, glad tidings, elegies, hired female mourners, asceticism, trust in God, and prayers of invocations

2.4.1.
On congratulations and glad tidings

2.4.2.
On elegies and hired female mourners
2.4.3.
On asceticism and trust in God
2.4.4.
On prayers of invocation

2.5.
On the ruler, what is required of him, and what he is in need of. And on that which is incumbent upon his subjects with respect to him, and vice versa. And related to this is the discussion of the advisors and the generals of the armies, and the descriptions of weapons, and the holders of religious positions, and the scribes, and the eloquent ones

2.5.1.
On the conditions of the imamate, both legal and conventional
2.5.2.
On the qualities of the ruler, his character, and the ways in which he is superior to others. And a recounting of what has been transmitted of the sayings of the caliphs and the rulers that demonstrate their superior stature and their noble character
2.5.3.
On what is owed to the ruler by the subjects in the way of obedience, faithful counsel, glorification, and reverence
2.5.4.
On the commandments of rulers
2.5.5.
On what is owed to the subjects by the ruler
2.5.6.
On good statecraft, and the management of the kingdom. And connected with this are the subjects of judiciousness and determination, seizing the opportunity, self-mastery, forgiveness, punishment, and revenge
2.5.7.
On consultation, following opinions, despotism, and on the question of whose opinion should be relied upon, and which rulers did not like asking for counsel

2.5.8.
On safeguarding secrets, granting audiences, and on chamberlains
2.5.9.
On the advisors and the ruler's companions
2.5.10.
On the commanders of the armies, holy war, war stratagems, descriptions of battles, fortresses, and what was said in the description of weapons
2.5.11.
On judges and governors
2.5.12.
On the court of grievances this being a branch of the House of Justice
2.5.13.
On supervision of moral behavior
2.5.14.
On the scribes and the eloquent ones; on secretaryship and its different branches of duties and writings, namely the chancery, administrative and financial secretaryship, legal secretaryship, the copying of manuscripts, and writing pedagogy

3.0.
THE THIRD BOOK, ON THE MUTE BEASTS
3.1.
On the carnivorous animals
3.1.1.
On the lion, tiger, and panther
3.1.2.
On the cheetah, dog, wolf, hyena, and Egyptian mongoose
3.1.3.
On the grey squirrel, fox, bear, cat, and pig
3.2.
On the wild beasts, antelopes, and those species related to them
3.2.1.
On what has been said about the elephant, the rhinoceros, the giraffe, oryx, and deer
3.2.2.
On what has been said about wild asses, mountain goat, and Saharan oryx

3.2.3.
On what has been said about the antelope, the hare, the monkey, and the ostrich
3.3.
On livestock
3.3.1.
On the horse
3.3.2.
On mules and hinnies and donkeys
3.3.3.
On camels, cattle, sheep, and goats
3.4.
On venomous creatures
3.4.1.

On deadly venomous creatures
3.4.2.
On nondeadly venomous creatures
3.5.
On birds and fish, containing an additional chapter on what has been said about hunting implements for land and sea
3.5.1.
On carnivorous raptors, and they are: eagles, goshawks, saker falcons, and peregrine falcons
3.5.2.
On the scavenger birds, and they are: the vulture, the Egyptian vulture, the kite, and the crow
3.5.3.
On the herbivorous birds, and they are: the francolin, the bustard, the peacock, the cock, the hen, goose, duck, flamingo, kingfisher, the swallow, jay, the starling, the quail, the hoopoe, magpie, and sparrows
3.5.4.
On the common birds, and they are: the turtle dove, the palm dove, the ring dove, collared doves, sandgrouse, the stock dove and its kinds, and the parrot
3.5.5.
On the nocturnal birds, and they are: the bat, the (mythical bird) Karawān, the owl, screech owl
3.5.6.
On the winged insects, and they are: ants, the hornet, the spider, locusts, silk worms, the fly, gnats, mosquitoes
3.5.7.
On the kinds of fish, including the dophin, electric ray, crocodile, skink, tortoise, turtle, hippopotamus, sable, beaver, ermine, frogs, crab, and some marvels of the sea
3.5.8.
On the descriptions of implements of hunting on land and at sea, and the description of crossbows

4.0.
THE FOURTH BOOK, ON PLANTS ON DIFFERENT KINDS OF SCENTS, PERFUMERY, GALIA MOSCATA PERFUMES MADE OF ALOE WITH VARIOUS ADMIXTURES, DISTILLATES, AND OTHER THINGS
4.1.
On the origin of plants, and what different soils are suited to producing. And related to this is the discussion of vegetables and foodstuffs
4.1.1.
On the origin of plants, and their arrangement
4.1.2.
On what different kinds of soil are suited to producing, and on what uproots a plant root
4.1.3.
On foodstuffs and vegetables
4.2.
On trees
4.2.1.
On those whose fruit has an inedible peel
4.2.2.
On those whose fruit has an inedible stone

4.2.3.
On those whose fruit has neither peel nor stone

4.3.
On aromatic flowers

4.3.1.
On aromatics that can be distilled. And these include four kinds: the rose, the wild rose, the white willow, and the water lily

4.3.2.
On aromatics that cannot be distilled. And these include violets, narcissus jasmine, myrtle, saffron, mint

4.4.
On gardens and flowers. And connected with this are the gum resins, mannas, and saps (including such things as wax, honey, sugar, wormwood, etc.)

4.4.1.
On gardens, and how they have been described in poetry and prose

4.4.2.
On flowers, and how they have been described

4.4.3.
On gum resins, containing twenty-eight types

4.4.4.
On mannas and secretions

4.5.
On the forms of aromatics, perfumery, Galia moscata, perfumes made of aloe with various admixtures, distillates, oils, certain perfumes, sexual medicines, and the sympathetic properties

4.5.1.
On musk and its varieties

4.5.2.
On ambergris, its varieties, and its sources

4.5.3.
On wood, its types and sources

4.5.4.
On sandal wood, its types and sources

4.5.5.
On spikenard and its types; and on the clove, and its essence

4.5.6.
On costus and its types

4.5.7.
On the production of Galia moscata and aloe-based admixtures

4.5.8.
On the production of *rāmik* and *sukk*

4.5.9.
On the production of certain perfumes, and on distilled water and undistilled

4.5.10.
On the medicines that promote sex and make it pleasurable, and what is related to that

4.5.11.
On what is to be done with sympathetic qualities

5.0.
THE FIFTH BOOK, ON HISTORY

5.1.
On the creation of Adam and Eve, their story, and those who came after Adam up until the end of the story of the People of the Ditch

5.1.1.
On the creation of Adam and Eve, and what is known of their story until the time of their death

5.1.2.
On Seth, the son of Adam, and his children

5.1.3.
On Idrīs the prophet

5.1.4.
On the story of Noah and the flood

5.1.5.
On the story of Hūd and the nation of ʿĀd, and their destruction by a furious wind

5.1.6.
On the story of Ṣāliḥ and the nation of Thamūd, who hobbled the She-Camel, and their destruction

5.1.7.
On the People of the Abandoned Well and the Lofty Palace, and their destruction

5.1.8.
On the People of the Ditch and their story

5.2.
On Abraham, the Friend of God; and on the story of Abraham and Nimrod; and on the stories of Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Dhū l-Kifl, and Shuʿayb

5.2.1.
On Abraham the Friend of God, and the story of Nimrod, son of Canaan

5.2.2.
On the story of Lot and his people, and how God turned their cities upside down

5.2.3.
On the story of Isaac and Jacob

5.2.4.
On the story of Joseph, son of Jacob

5.2.5.
On Job, his afflictions, and God's mercy upon him

5.2.6.
On Dhū l-Kifl, son of Job

5.2.7.
On Shuʿayb and the people of Madyan

5.3.
On Moses, son of ʿImrān, and the story of Moses and Pharaoh; and on Joshua and those who followed him; and on Ezekiel, Elijah, Elisha, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Goliath, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Nebuchadnezzar; and on the destruction of Jerusalem and its rebuilding and the story of ʿUzayr; and on the story of Jonah, son of Matthew, and on Bulūqiyā, Zachariah, John (the Baptist), ʿImrān, Mary, Jesus, and the stories of the disciples, and how they were received by those to whom they were sent, and on the story of the prophet George (Jirjīs). This section contains six chapters, and I have added an appendix of four chapters in which I recount what has been said about the events that will precede Jesus's Descent to Earth, the period he will spend here, his death, what will follow him,

and something on the Day of Resurrection

5.3.1.
On the story of Moses, son of ʿImrān; and on Aaron, the drowning of Pharaoh, the Israelites, Korah, Balaam, the Giants, and others

5.3.2.
On those who followed Moses, such as Joshua, Ezekiel, Elijah, Elisha, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Goliath, David, and Solomon

5.3.3.
On the stories of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of Jerusalem and its restoration, and the story of ʿUzayr that relates to that

5.3.4.
On the story of Jonah, and on Bulūqiyā

5.3.5.
On Zachariah, John, ʿImrān, his daughter Mary, and Jesus the son of Mary

5.3.6.
On the disciples whom Jesus sent forth, and on what became of them after he was raised up to heaven; and on the story of George

5.3.7.
An account of the signs that will appear before the Descent of Jesus, son of Mary

5.3.8.
On the Descent of Jesus to Earth, and his killing of the Anti-Christ (al-Dajjāl), the emergence of the tribes of Gog and Magog, and their destruction; and the death of Jesus

5.3.9.
On what will take place after the death of Jesus, son of Mary, up until the First Sounding of the Trumpet

5.3.10.
On the stories of the Day of Resurrection, and on the Second Sounding of the Trumpet

5.4.
On the kings of ancient countries (*aṣqāʿ*), nations (*umam*), and territitorial divisions (*ṭawāʾif*), and on the Dam-Flood, and the battles of the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance

5.4.1.
On Alexander the Great, who is recounted in the Quran, *Sūrat al-Kahf*

5.4.2.
On the kings of (ancient) countries, including Egypt, India, China, and Gibraltar

5.4.3.
On the kings of the ancient Persian nations, including the first kings of the Persians and their principalities, the Sasanians, the Ancient Greeks, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Slavs, the Lombards, the Franks, the Galicians, and the tribes of the Sudan

5.4.4.
On the history of the Arab kings; and connected to this is the story of the Dam-Flood

5.4.5.
On the battle-days of the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance

5.5.
On the history of the Islamic community, (comprising) an account of the

biography of our Prophet Muḥammad; the history of the caliphs who followed him; the history of the Umayyad state, the Abbasid state, and the ʿAlids; the states of Muslim rulers and the conquests that God Almighty bestowed upon them, as we shall recount

5.5.1.
On the biography of our master, the Messenger of God

5.5.2.
On the stories of the caliphs after him: Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī, as well as ʿAlī's son al-Ḥasan

5.5.3.
On the history of the Umayyad state in Syria and beyond

5.5.4.
On the history of the Abbasid state in Iraq and Egypt

5.5.5.
On the history of the Umayyad state in al-Andalus, and on al-Andalus after the fall of the Umayyads

5.5.6.
On the history of Ifrīqiyya and the Maghrib, and those who ruled them as vassals and those who achieved independence in their rule

5.5.7.
On the descendants of Abū Ṭālib who sought out the caliphate during the time of the Umayyad and Abbasid states and were killed, following the assassination of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī

5.5.8.
On the histories of the Zanj, the Qarāmiṭa, and the Khawārij in Mosul

5.5.9.
On those who became independent in the eastern and northern lands during the Abbasid period, namely the kings of Khorasan, Transoxania, al-Jibāl, Ṭabaristān, Ghazna, al-Ghawr, Sindh, India. These include the states of the Samanids, the Saffarids, the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids, and the Daylamids

5.5.10.
On the history of the rulers of Iraq, Mosul, the Jazīra, Diyarbakr, Syria, and the region of Aleppo; these include the Hamdanid state, the Buyids, the Saljuqs, and the Atabegs

5.5.11.
On the Khwārizmid state; and the state of Genghis Khan, that being the Tatars; and those that split off from it

5.5.12.
On the history of the kings of Egypt, who ruled during the time of the Abbasid state, in place of its caliphs; this includes the history of the Fatimids, who traced their lineage to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the territories they ruled in the Maghrib and how they came to conquer Egypt, Syria, Aleppo, the fortresses, the coastline, and other places until their state perished; and on the rise of the Ayyubid state and the history of its kings in Egypt and Syria, until it perished; and the rise of the Mamluk state (*dawlat al-Turk*), and those who ruled it, and those who were brought as slaves from other climes, and the kingdoms they conquered, and other aspects of their history, up until the time of our composition of this work, in the year . . . and seven hundred,[2] during the reign of our master the sultan, the most glorious leader, the Victorious Ruler, Protector of the World and the Faith, Sultan of Islam and the Muslims, Abī al-Fatḥ Muḥammad, son of the martyred sultan al-Manṣur

Qalāwūn, Sword of the World and the Faith, may God perpetuate his reign and water his father's legacy with the rainclouds of His mercy and pleasure, and with the blessing of (the Prophet Muḥammad), the master of the children of ʿAdnān!

APPENDIX B

A GUIDE TO THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*'S EDITIONS AND CHAPTER WORD COUNTS

AL-NUWAYRĪ'S *ULTIMATE AMBITION* IS AVAILABLE in two complete editions. The standard Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya (DKM) edition was begun by Aḥmad Zakī Pāshā in Cairo in 1923 and only completed in 1997. A new edition was published in 2004 by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya in Beirut. The latter press is often accused of producing derivative editions of uneven quality, but in the present case the scholarly apparatus seems fairly independent of the Egyptian edition. The Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya (DKI) version is also printed in a cleaner and more legible typeface, but most importantly, it is (as of the current moment) widely available and affordable, whereas the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya edition went out of print long ago and is difficult to find outside of certain research libraries. Unless it is reissued, future researchers may have to depend increasingly on the Beirut edition.

To this end, I have assembled below a table of contents for the two editions so as to simplify the task of locating material in one edition based on references to the other. I have also included the word counts for the work's five books (*funūn*). The chapter titles are abbreviated; please see appendix A for the full titles.

APPENDIX TABLE. THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*'S EDITIONS AND CHAPTER WORD COUNTS

	DKM	DKI	WORDS
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] : Heaven and Earth
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]tion of heavens
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]figuration of heavens
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]gels
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]ts
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]d stars
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]ds, snow, hail

1.2.1
Shooting stars, thunder, lightning
Winds
Rain
Nights and days
Months and years
Seasons
Festivals and holidays
Creation of the Earth
Names of the Earth
Size of the Earth
Seven climes
Mountains
Seas and islands
Rivers, streams, springs
Characteristics of different peoples
Attributes of different lands
Ancient buildings
Descriptions of fortresses
Descriptions of palaces and dwellings

Book 28 The Human Being
Anthology, naming, stages, nature of the human being
Early descriptions of body parts
Amorous poetry, desire, love, passion
Physiology
Incubi
Superstitions of the pre-Islamic Arabs
Omens of the soothsayers, omens and ornithomancy, physiognomy, induction
Euphemisms and metonymies, allusions
Enigmas and riddles
Satirical poetry
Invective
Entertaining anecdotes and jests
Wine
Boon companions and cup bearers
Music and singing
The singer
Congratulations and glad tidings
Elegies and hired female mourners
Fatalism and trust in God
Formulas of invocation
Legal and conventional conditions of rulership
Qualities of the ruler
What is owed to the ruler
Commandments of rulers
What is owed to the subjects by the ruler
Private statecraft
Consultation
The chamberlain
Advisors and companions of the ruler
Weapons, soldiers
Regents and governors

of grievances
vision of moral behavior
and secretaryship

: Animals
tiger, panther
ah, dog, wolf, hyena, Egyptian mongoose
squirrel, fox, bear, cat, pig
ant, rhinoceros, giraffe, oryx, deer
ass, mountain goat, Saharan oryx
le, hare, monkey, ostrich
and donkey
s, cattle, livestock
y venomous creatures
eadly venomous creatures
orous birds: eagle, goshawk, saker falcon, peregrine falcon
ger birds: vulture, Egyptian vulture, kite, crow
orous birds: francolin, bustard, peacock, cock, hen, goose, duck, flamingo, *anīs*, kingfisher, swallow, jay, starling, quail, hoopoe, magpie, sparrow
on birds: turtle dove, palm dove, ring dove, collared dove*, shifnīn, ʿabaṭbaṭ*, *nawwāḥ*, *qaṭāt*, stock dove, parrot
nal birds: bat, Karawān, owl, screech owl
d insects: ant, hornet, spider, locust, silk worm, fly, gnat, mosquito, *ḥurqūṣ*
g instruments

: Plants
in of plants
stuffs and vegetables
whose fruit has an inedible peel
whose fruit has an inedible stone
whose fruit has no peel or stone
atics that can be distilled: rose, wild rose, white willow, water lily
atics that cannot be distilled: violet, jasmine, myrtle, saffron, mint
s
rs
esins
s
k and its varieties
ergriis
atic wood
l wood
nard and clove
s
moscata and aloe-based admixtures
ound perfumes
es and essences
nes that promote sexual pleasure
thetic qualities

History

Mūsa
and his children
Aṣḥāb al-biʾr
Aṣḥāb al-rass
Nimrūd
Ibn Ḥanbal
Dhū-l-Kifl
Ayyūb
Hārūn, Banū Isrāʾīl, Qārūn, Balʿam, al-Jabbārīn
Dhū-l-Nūn, Ḥizqīl, Ilyās, al-Yasaʿ, ʿĪlā, Ashmuwīl, Ṭālūt, Jālūt, Dāwud, Sulaymān
Armiyā, Bukhta Naṣṣara, etc.
Dhū-l-Nūn
Zakariyyā, Yaḥyā, ʿImrān, Maryam, ʿĪsā
disciples whom Jesus sent forth, on what became of them after he was raised up to heaven, on the story of George
account of the signs that will appear before the Descent of Jesus, son of Mary
Gog and Magog
death
Resurrection
Dhū-l-Qarnayn
ulūk al-Aṣqāʿ
ulūk al-Umam
ulūk al-ʿArab and the dam-flood
attle-days of the Arabs
ophet's *sīra*
ories of the caliphs after him, including ʿAlī and his son al-Ḥasan
mayyad state in Syria
bbāsid state in Iraq and Egypt
mayyad state in al-Andalus and al-Andalus after the fall of the Umayyad state
ya and the Maghrib, etc.
who contested for power between the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid states
anj, the Qarāmiṭa, and the Khawārij in Mosul
who became independent in the eastern and northern lands during the ʿAbbāsid period
of Iraq and Mosul and the Jazīra and Syria
hwārazmid state, the Chingizid state, and those that split off from them
ers of Egypt up to the present time

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE. ENCYCLOPEDISM IN THE MAMLUK EMPIRE

1.
Nihāya, 4:85–86.

2.
On sizes of medieval Islamic libraries, see Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library*; Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work*, 72–77; Petry, "Some Observations on the Position of the Librarian in the Scholarly Establishment of Cairo during the Later Middle Ages," 17–18.

3.
Important treatments include: Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit"; Biesterfeldt, "Arabisch-islamische Enzyklopädien: Formen und Funktionen"; Blachère, "Quelques réflexions sur les formes de l'encyclopédisme"; Chapoutot-Remadi, "Les encyclopédies arabes de la fin du Moyen Age"; Endress, ed., *Organizing Knowledge*; Heck, *The Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization*; Kilpatrick, "A Genre in Classical Arabic Literature"; Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*; Langermann, "Ibn Kammūna and the 'New Wisdom' of the Thirteenth Century"; Marzolph, "Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading"; Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters*; Riedel, "Searching for the Islamic Episteme"; al-Samman, "Arabische Enzyklopädie und Bibliographie"; Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*"; van Berkel, "Opening Up a World of Knowledge"; van Gelder, "Compleat Men, Women, and Books"; von Hees, *Enzyklopädie als Spiegel des Weltbildes*.

4.
Pellat, "Les Encyclopédies dans le Monde Arabe," 631, fn. 1.

5.
Hammer-Purgstall, "Über die Encyklopädie der Araber, Perser und Türken." Hammer-Purgstall's other sources included Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, Mikhāʾīl al-Ghazīrī's (Casiri) *Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana Escurialensis*, and various other manuscript catalogs. The three articles comprising his series on Arabic, Persian, and Turkish encyclopedism were addenda to his first book, *Encyklopädische Übersicht der Wissenschaften des Orients aus sieben arabischen, persischen und türkischen Werken übersetzt*.

6.
Hammer-Purgstall, *Encyklopädische Übersicht*, iv.

7.

Bonebakker, "*Adab* and the Concept of *Belles-Lettres*"; Bonebakker, "Early Arabic Literature and the Term *Adab*"; Gabrieli, "Adab"; Heinrichs, "The Classification of the Sciences"; Heinrichs, "Review of *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature.*"

8.
Pellat, "Les Encyclopédies dans le Monde Arabe," 635–38.

9.
On the encyclopedism of the *Book of Animals*, see Montgomery, *Al-Jāḥiẓ: In Praise of Books*, 266–73.

10.
Kilpatrick, "A Genre in Classical Arabic Literature"; Pellat, "Les Encyclopédies dans le Monde Arabe," 638–42.

11.
Ibn Qutayba, *Adab al-kātib*, 10–11; translation in C. E. Bosworth, "A Pioneer Arabic Encyclopedia of the Sciences," 98–99.

12.
See Bos, "*Exoterikoi Logoi* and *Enkyklioi Logoi*"; Fowler, "Encyclopaedias: Definitions and Theoretical Problems"; Henningsen, "Enzyklopädie"; Simone, "La notion d'Encyclopédie"; Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 1–35.

13.
Blair, "Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopaedism."

14.
An exception was Johann Heinrich Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* of 1630, a four-volume work of multidisciplinary scope, which would have no direct imitators in the seventeenth century. See Blair, "Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopedism."

15.
Blair, "A Europeanist's Perspective," 203.

16.
On encyclopedism in the European scholastic tradition see especially Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*.

17.
Al-Bustānī, *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif*. See also Hourani, "Bustani's Encyclopedia."

18.
Al-Yāzijī, "Basṭ wa-īḍāḥ." 330. I am grateful to Ahmed El Shamsy for piecing together the history of the term *mawsūʿa* and for sharing an unpublished discussion of it with me.

19.
Zakī, *Mawsūʿāt al-ʿulūm al-ʿarabiyya*.

20.
See König and Woolf, "Introduction."

21.

Ann Blair has shown that "the great instability and diversity of contemporary classifications of books and of knowledge in the late Renaissance makes discussion of disciplinary or generic categories delicate—all the more so in natural philosophy which lacked a clear professional base." Blair, *Theater of Nature*, 46.

22.
Munro, *The Square Egg and Other Sketches, with Three Plays*, 136.

23.
Along these lines, Josef van Ess has asked: "Is Ṣafaḍī's *Wāfī bil-wafayāt* an encyclopaedia or merely an extremely 'comprehensive' biographical dictionary? Is ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Mughnī* a Muʿtazilī encyclopaedia or simply a *summa theologica*? Is Qudāma b. Jaʿfar's *Kitāb al-Kharāj wa-ṣināʿat al-kātib* rightly called an encyclopaedia . . . or is it simply a manual?" van Ess, "Encyclopaedic Activities in the Islamic World," 6–7.

24.
The name Shihāb al-Dīn was al-Nuwayrī's sobriquet (*laqab*); his personal name was Aḥmad. The most substantive information on al-Nuwayrī's life, family background, teachers, acquaintances, and education comes from the *Ultimate Ambition* itself, along with various biographical notices written after his death (see chapter 5). Amīna Jamāl al-Dīn extracted much of this information from the work with great precision in her 1984 doctoral study, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*. Other important treatments include: Chapoutot-Remadi, "al-Nuwayrī," *EI2*; Chapoutot-Remadi, "An-Nuwayri (1279–1332)"; Krachkovskiĭ, "al-Nuwairi," *EI1*; al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī fī kitābihi*. Specialized studies are cited below.

25.
Al-Nuwayrī's father, Tāj al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī (d. 699/1300) was born in a Cairene madrasa known as Manāzil al-ʿIzz and was buried in the mausoleum of Zayn al-Dīn al-Mālikī; see *Nihāya*, 31:409–10 (DKI: 31:255–56). The fact of his father's birth and death in educational institutions suggests that he was a member of the scholarly class and a close associate of Zayn al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Makhlūf al-Nuwayrī al-Jazūlī, who served as Mālikī chief justice from 1285–1318. This latter figure played an important role in the younger al-Nuwayrī's life, but it is unclear whether it was he who secured him his first job in administration. In al-Nuwayrī's obituary for the chief judge, he notes the man's generosity and kindness to his friends, "particularly the people of his own town," which fits a pattern of nepotism in Mamluk administrative recruitment. On the other hand, the fact that al-Nuwayrī did not become a Mālikī like Ibn Makhlūf but rather a Shāfiʿī may suggest that his most important early patron was another famous chief judge, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, a fellow resident of Qūṣ, whom al-Nuwayrī venerated. On the practice of using madrasas as burial places during this period, see Berkey, "Mamluks and the World of Higher Islamic Education"; Talmon-Heller, "*ʿIlm, Shafāʿah,* and *Barakah*."

26.
Al-Nuwayrī's father's obituary indicates that he had another son named Muḥammad, but al-Nuwayrī does not mention him or any other siblings in his work. The only other relatives discussed are his father's grandfather Zakī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Dāʾim, who lived in al-Nuwayra and was a follower of a well-known and respected Sufi shaykh; see *Nihāya*, 29:72–75 (DKI: 29:46–48). He also mentions his father's first cousin, the judge ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad, son of another judge, Ṣafī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sharaf al-Dīn Yaʿqūb al-Nuwayrī. This latter figure served as the head of the chancery in Tripoli and in several other high-ranking positions in Ṣafad, Ḥamā, and al-Karak; see *Nihāya*, 32:276

(DKI: 32:213). Although I have come across no direct evidence in the *Ultimate Ambition* supporting Krachkovskiĭ's claim that al-Nuwayrī's father was "an official of note" (see "al-Nuwairī," *EI1*), the connections that his son enjoyed from a young age, coupled with the fact that he had a cousin who was a prominent bureaucrat in Syria, suggest that the family business was indeed administration.

27.

On Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's favors towards his fellow Qūṣīs, see Berkey, "Culture and Society," 382. Kamāl al-Dīn Jaʿfar b. Thaʿlab al-Udfuwī lists the following teachers in his biographical notice on al-Nuwayrī, whom he knew personally: "He studied *ḥadīth* with al-Sharīf Mūsā b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Yaʿqūb b. Aḥmad b. al-Ṣābūnī, Aḥmad al-Ḥajjār, Zaynab bt. Yaḥyā, the chief judge Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Jamāʿa, and others." See al-Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāliʿ al-saʿīd*, 96–97.

28.

There has been some confusion among scholars about when and where al-Nuwayrī began his administrative career. Amīna Jamāl al-Dīn and Mounira Chapoutot-Remadi have both proposed that al-Nuwayrī got his first job in Cairo in 1298 at the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ* (the Bureau of the Sultan's Privy Purse), spent three years working there while living at the Nāṣiriyya madrasa, and was then posted to a different assignment in Syria in 1302. They suggest that he returned to his old job and residence in Cairo in 1304, and was given the additional responsibility of supervising the Manṣūrī hospital-mosque complex and a range of other properties. This chronology is based on two statements found in a manuscript of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s thirtieth volume at the Egyptian National Library (MS 549, *maʿārif ʿāmma*). The first statement places al-Nuwayrī in Cairo at the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ* and the Nāṣiriyya in the year 1298: "and at the time, I was managing the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ* for the sultan, and living at the Nāṣiriyya madrasa" (see Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 36, fn. 1, citing Dār al-Kutub MS 549, vol. 30, fol. 12; see also Chapoutot-Remadi, "al-Nuwayrī," *EI2*). The second statement is found in the same volume but many pages later, in the chapter for the year 703 AH. In it, al-Nuwayrī says that he arrived in Cairo from Damascus on the 27th of Ramaḍān 703 (May 3, 1304 CE) to take up his responsibilities at the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ* (Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 55, fn. 1, citing Dār al-Kutub MS 549, vol. 30, fol. 27; see also Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 56, fn. 1, citing a different MS 592, vol. 4, fol. 3.) On the basis of these two statements, Jamāl al-Dīn and Chapoutot-Remadi proposed that al-Nuwayrī began his career in Cairo, went to Syria, and returned to Cairo a few years later. I propose that this chronology is inaccurate, and that the two statements in question refer to one and the same period. This conjecture is based on two sources of evidence. First, when the *Ultimate Ambition*'s thirtieth volume was edited, it was discovered that MS 549 had many folios out of order (see Dār al-Kutub edition, 31:5–6, for editor's introduction). Among the sections that were rearranged, presumably, was the first passage about al-Nuwayrī's employment at the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ*. Both editions of the *Ultimate Ambition* now place this statement in the chapter for the year 703 AH, just a few pages away from the second statement (see DKI 32:51 for the first statement and DKI 32:54 for the second). This makes more sense, given that the Nāṣiriyya madrasa did not officially open for service until the year 1303, so al-Nuwayrī could not have been living there in 1298. As I discuss in chapter 3, the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad bought the madrasa from his predecessor al-ʿĀdil Kitbugha in 1298, but construction was not completed for several years. Therefore, the chronology implied by the arrangement of the printed edition of the *Ultimate Ambition* must be correct: al-Nuwayrī's first documented appointment was in Damascus in January 1302, and he only joined the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ* in Cairo and took up residence at the Nāṣiriyya in May 1304.

29.
Al-Nuwayrī arrived in Cairo on 27 Ramaḍān 703 AH (May 3, 1304 CE). See *Nihāya*, 32:73, 78 (DKI: 32:51, 54).

30.
See chapter 4.

31.
See Chapoutot-Remadi, "al-Nuwayrī," *EI2*; Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 71.

32.
Pellat, "Les Encyclopédies dans le Monde Arabe," 656–58. See also the recent characterization of al-Ibshīhī's fifteenth-century *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf* as "a literary product summing up previous knowledge in a period of cultural decline." (Marzolph, "Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading.")

33.
For some noteworthy treatments, see Allen and Richards, *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*; Bauer, "Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī"; Bauer, "In Search of 'Post-Classical Literature'"; Bauer, "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches"; Guo, "Mamluk Historical *Rajaz* Poetry"; Guo, *The Performing Arts in Medieval Islam*; Guo, "Self-Mockery as a Genre in Mamluk Satiric Poetry"; Homerin, "Reflections on Arabic Poetry in the Mamluk Age"; Irwin, "Mamluk Literature"; Lowry and Stewart, *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350–1850*; Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters*; Rowson, "An Alexandrian Age in Fourteenth-Century Damascus"; Rowson, "Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamluk Literature."

34.
Chapoutot-Remadi, "Les encyclopédies arabes de la fin du Moyen Age"; Ḍayf, *al-Fann wa-madhāhibuhu fī al-nathr al-ʿarabī*, 379; Ḥamza, *al-Ḥaraka al-fikriyya fī Miṣr fī al-ʿaṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-l-Mamlūkī al-awwal*, 315; Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 98–101; al-Shakʿa, *Manāhij al-taʾlīf ʿinda al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿArab,* 755.

35.
Al-Musawi, "Pre-Modern Belletristic Prose," 101–2.

36.
Blair, "Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopaedism," 383–86.

37.
Rosenberg, "An Eighteenth-Century Time Machine," 48–52.

38.
D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse."

39.
Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative," 99.

40.
See *Nihāya*, vol. 27. On al-Nuwayrī's discussion of the Mongols, see Amitai, "Al-Nuwayrī as a Historian of the Mongols"; Angermann, "Kompilation als narrative Strategie."

41.
These offensives took place during the years 1281, 1299, 1300, 1303, and 1312. Only the 1299 invasion resulted in a military victory for the Mongols, at the Battle of Homs.

42.
On this invasion, see Amitai, "Whither the Ilkhanid Army?"

43.
Nihāya, 32:27–28 (DKI: 32:18).

44.
The phrase in quotes is taken from a Quranic verse (Q 10:27): "And those who earn ill-deeds, (for them) requital of each ill-deed by the like thereof; and ignominy overtaketh them—They have no protector from God—as if their faces had been covered with a cloak of darkest night. Such are rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein."

45.
On the frontier, see Amitai-Preiss, "Northern Syria between the Mongols and Mamluks."

46.
Amitai points out that al-Nuwayrī may have been the earliest source to note the link between the Mongol invasions of the Russian steppe and the rise of the Mamluks. See Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 18.

47.
See Berkey, "Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages," 376–77; Blachère, "Quelques réflexions"; Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, 128–38; Chapoutot-Remadi, "Les encyclopédies arabes de la fin du Moyen Age"; Gilli-Elewy, *Bagdad nach dem Sturz des Kalifats*, 180–81; Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*, 4.

48.
The effect of the conquests on migration patterns in the Near East and Central Asia was complex. There was a flow of scholars in both directions; some, like the Baghdadī philosopher Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284–85), sought to escape from the oncoming tide of the Mongol advance and then ducked back behind it once the armies reached Syria. In other instances, the Mongols singled out the ʿulamāʾ as booty but then patronized them, as was the case of the astronomer al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), who built his famed observatory under the auspices of Hülegü at Marāgha, where a library was also built with the books carried off from the conquests of Iraq and Syria. On Ibn Kammūna, see Langermann, "Ibn Kammuna at Aleppo," 14. On Mongol patronage of scholarship, see DeWeese, "Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the Mongol Empire."

49.
The question of how to interpret the signs and character of political and fiscal centralization in the Turkish sultanate has been debated in recent years. For a helpful survey and mediating synthesis of the subject, see Van Steenbergen, "'Mamlukisation' between Social Theory and Social Practice"; see also Van Steenbergen, "The Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State." See chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of this topic.

50.
Musawi, "Pre-Modern Belletristic Prose."

51.
Nihāya, 8:212–13.

52.
Bauer, "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," 108; Bauer, "Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication," 23; Bauer, "Anthologies," *EI3*: "Eager to find pleasure in literature, to improve their literary knowledge, and to gain social prestige as cognoscenti of literature and the subtleties of the Arabic language, this bourgeois public engendered a broad demand for literary works, especially in the form of anthologies."

53.
I translate al-Nuwayrī's "*fann al-adab*" here as "the art of adab," rather than "the branch of adab." By "art," I have in mind the acceptation of a branch of knowledge (as in "the art of war"), rather than art as creative expression. Both of these ideas are encompassed by the modern Arabic word "*fann*," but the classical term did not denote the latter. I have chosen to translate the term "adab" in the title of the work as "erudition" partly for the sake of preserving the rhyme between "arab" and "adab," but also because al-Nuwayrī's understanding of adab encompassed more than just belles-lettres, as discussed in later chapters. On the evolution of the Arabic word *fann,* see Mestyan, "Arabic Lexicography and European Aesthetics."

54.
In the prefaces to each of the five books of the *Ultimate Ambition*, al-Nuwayrī uses a register of rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) common in Mamluk literature. This accounts for the occasionally incongruous quality of the metaphors that he employs, which connect more successfully in the original text because of the devices of double-entendre and *figura etymologica* embedded within them.

55.
Nihāya, 1:2–3; *Ultimate Ambition*, 1–2.

56.
Nihāya, 1: 26–27; *Ultimate Ambition*, 2–3.

57.
Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*," 214.

58.
See the epistle by ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Yamānī about the literary debate between the candle and candelabrum (*Nihāya,* 1:124–29 [DKI: 116–21]), in which the author discusses the branches of the arts (*funūn al-ādāb*) and their smaller branches (*shuʿūb*). This gives us some sense of how al-Nuwayrī used the term *funūn*.

59.
Al-Nuwayrī does not indicate that he knew any of these figures personally, but he mentions their appointments and comings and goings on several occasions in the historical book of the *Nihāya*. He devotes an obituary to Sharaf al-Dīn b. Faḍl Allāh, who was head of the chancery (*kātib al-sirr*) in both Cairo and Damascus (see *Nihāya,* 32:277 [DKI: 32:213]). His younger brother Badr al-Dīn was a chancery official in Damascus, and his other brother, Muḥyī al-Dīn, held several high-ranking positions. Al-Nuwayrī also mentions the young Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, who would eventually write

The Routes of Insight into the Civilized Realms (*Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*), in his description of Muḥyī al-Dīn's arrival in Cairo in 729/1329, when he was appointed confidential secretary (see *Nihāya*, 33:278 [DKI: 33:211]). See also Salibi, "Faḍl Allāh," *EI2*.

60.
Bauer, "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," 127.

61.
Bauer, "Adab c) and Islamic Scholarship after the "Sunnī Revival," *EI3*.

62.
Bauer, "Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī," 15–16.

63.
Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 42.

64.
Ghersetti, "On Mamluk Anthologies Again," 77.

65.
Berkey, "Culture and Society," 403–4. In this regard, al-Nuwayrī's work may be compared in certain ways to a text such as Jean Bodin's (d. 1596) *Theatrum Universae Naturae* and other works of Renaissance natural philosophy, "works designed to instruct and delight nonspecialists, from university students and other 'studious persons' to more general readers, for example, those identified as 'the curious.'" As Ann Blair notes, the late Renaissance "fostered an explosion of works of general natural philosophy. Authors in many different professions and circumstances extolled the virtues of the study of nature, as morally uplifting, useful, and pleasantly varied. The fluidity of the social and cultural position of the field allowed for the publication of many different kinds of works, including some identifiable genres (new and not so new) and a number of individual books which, like Bodin's *Theatrum*, combined the elements of different kinds without fitting any in particular" (Blair, *Theater of Nature*, 14).

CHAPTER TWO. STRUCTURES OF KNOWLEDGE

1.
Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, 231.

2.
Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xv.

3.
See, for example, al-Mālikī, *al-Kanz al-madfūn wa-l-fulk al-mashḥūn*.

4.
The only subdivisions (*fuṣūl*) that do appear in al-Nuwayrī's table of contents are §2.3.1.1–§2.3.1.13 (on the subject of praise), and §2.3.2.1–§2.3.2.14 (on invective). See *Nihāya*, 1:4–25 (DKI: 1:4–18).

5.

See appendix A for a translation of al-Nuwayrī's table of contents.

6.
Nihāya, 9:343–10:78 (DKI: 9:210–10:48).

7.
Nihāya, 1:124–29 (DKI: 1:16–21). According to Geert Jan van Gelder, al-Nuwayrī was the first compiler to transmit this epistle. See van Gelder, "Shamʿa," *EI2*.

8.
Jabbūr, *Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi wa-ʿIqduhu*, 32.

9.
Murphy, *Pliny the Elder*, 30.

10.
Blachère, "Quelques réflexions," 9.

11.
Murphy, *Pliny the Elder*, 30.

12.
Nihāya, 9:304 (DKI: 9:185).

13.
Nihāya, 1:359 (DKI: 1:331).

14.
In certain instances, al-Nuwayrī even specifies that a volume number refers to "this copy of the work," a cue to any future copyists to make the necessary adjustments to the citation. See, for example *Nihāya*, 1:374 (DKI: 1:347, §1.5.3.2), 2:210–11 (DKI: 2:223, §2.1.3.6).

15.
See also *Nihāya*, 1:401 (DKI: 1:370), the introduction to a chapter on "descriptions of strongholds and fortresses," which includes an intervention by al-Nuwayrī on his rationale for introducing a cross-reference. He writes: "I summarized this chapter in the second Book, which follows this Book, [in the section] on the necessities of the ruler. However, I attached it to this Book because of its appropriateness and resemblance to [its subject matter], and so kept it out of the second Book and merely presented a summary there."

16.
Nihāya, 1:28 (DKI: 1:21).

17.
Nihāya, 28:11–33:320 (DKI: 28:3–33:243).

18.
Due to the vagaries of margins, layouts, and footnotes, printed pages are an imprecise way to arrive at a sense of the relative size of a work's constitutive elements. The latest edition of the *Ultimate Ambition*, published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, has book 3 at 308 pages. The standard edition, published over several decades by Dār al-Kutub al-

Miṣriyya, has the same book at 510 pages. Meanwhile, both editions print book 1 at around 375 pages, which means that editorial apparatuses are inconsistent across the same edition. Because of this inconsistency, word counts represent the most exact way to determine the size of a medieval text's divisions, and thanks to the digitization of many of these texts, this data is readily available to researchers.

19.
The short chapters are §5.1.2 (Seth and his children), §5.1.7 (The People of the Abandoned Well), §5.2.3 (the prophet Isaac), §5.2.6 (the prophet Dhū al-Kifl), and §5.3.9 (on the aftermath of Jesus's death). The long chapters are §5.5.1 (on the Prophet Muḥammad's biography), §5.5.2 (on the stories of the caliphs after Muḥammad), §5.5.3 (on the Umayyad state in Syria), §5.5.4 (on the Abbasid state in Iraq and Egypt), and §5.5.12 (on Egyptian history up to al-Nuwayrī's lifetime). In the case of several shorter chapters in §5.3, the likely reason for their relative brevity is the fact that they may have been later additions to the *Ultimate Ambition*, which is why al-Nuwayrī described them as part of an addendum (*dhayl*).

20.
Al-Nuwayrī states in the preface to the historical *fann* that he has maintained the same architectural pattern of five sections that he followed in the earlier books for simplicity and consistency's sake. See *Nihāya*, 13:3 (DKI: 13:6).

21.
Fedwa Malti-Douglas's *Structures of Avarice* and Bilal Orfali's *The Anthologist's Art* are two of the few monograph-length studies of anthological structures in classical Arabic literature. See also El Cheikh, "In Search for the Ideal Spouse"; Kilpatrick, "A Genre in Classical Arabic Literature"; Malti-Douglas, "Structure and Organization in a Monographic *Adab* Work"; Riedel, "Islamic Episteme;" Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*"; van Gelder, "Against Women, and Other Pleasantries." On declining linear sequences in adab collections, see Malti-Douglas, *Structures of Avarice*, 14; Riedel, "Islamic Episteme," 234; Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*, 222–23.

22.
While Ibn Qutayba's *Quintessential Reports* (*ʿUyūn al-akhbār*) has generally been seen as the archetypal adab encyclopedia—much in the same vein as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* in the medieval European encyclopedic tradition (see Ribémont, "On the Definition of an Encyclopaedic Genre in the Middle Ages")—recent scholarship has recast our understanding of Ibn Qutayba's book and the works that it apparently inspired. Stephanie Thomas has proposed "a more cautious use of the word 'archetype' to describe *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, and a more cautious use of *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* to epitomize 'adab,'" arguing that the work is "better thought of not as a prototype, but as a type," one that can be distinguished from other types such as al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *Apt Quotables*. See Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara,*" 241.

23.
Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*, 29. See also Meier, "Grundzüge der mittelalterlichen Enzyklopädik," 481; Riedel, "Islamic Episteme," 200–245.

24.
Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*, 29.

25.
This list of works is based with few modifications on the proposed list of paradigmatic

adab encyclopedias in Kilpatrick, "A Genre in Classical Arabic Literature."

26.
Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*; see also Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*; Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*," 208–38.

27.
Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*; see also Werkmeister, "Parallelstellen-Verzeichnis"; Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-farīd*.

28.
Al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-ādāb wa-thamar al-albāb*.

29.
Hamori, "Anthologies, Arabic Literature (Pre-Mongol Period)," *EI3*.

30.
Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ wa-muḥāwarāt al-shuʿarāʾ wa-l-bulaghāʾ*. On the structure and arrangement of this text, see especially Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*," 168–201, 243–48 (from which the translated titles above are taken) and Riedel "Islamic Episteme," 235–45. For an overview of al-Rāghib's life and works, see Key, "al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī"; see also Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind."

31.
Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Bahjat al-majālis wa-uns al-mujālis wa-shaḥdh al-dhāhin wa-l-hājis*.

32.
Al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār wa-nuṣūṣ al-akhbār*. Kâtip Çelebi seemed to think that the arrangement of this work as reflected in the extant manuscripts was not al-Zamakhsharī's, but does not provide proof. The editor of the work is inclined to assume that it was. See also Vadet, "Les grands thèmes de l'adab dans le Rabīʿ al-abrār d'al-Zamakhsharī."

33.
Ibn Ḥamdūn, *al-Tadhkira al-Ḥamdūniyya*; see also Muhanna, "Ibn Ḥamdūn."

34.
Al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf*; see also Marzolph, "Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading"; Tuttle, "al-Ibshīhī."

35.
Franz Rosenthal sees in the *Muḥāḍarāt's* order of chapters a shift in the importance of statecraft (which appeared first in the *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*'s chapter order), having been supplanted by a chapter on knowledge (Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 271); cf. Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara*," 223–24. Dagmar Riedel has argued that the twenty-five chapters of the *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ* can be grouped according to two different sets of themes, one conforming to the logic of *ordo rerum*, and the other according to *ordo artium*; see Riedel, "Islamic Episteme," 238–39. On *ordo rerum* and *ordo artium* ("traditional conceptions of the order of the world" vs. "rational and scientific approaches to knowledge, i.e. on disciplines or on a system of sciences," respectively) see Meier, "Organisation of Knowledge and Encyclopaedic *Ordo*," 104.

36.

Blachère, “Quelques réflexions,” 9.

37.
Kilito, “Le genre ‘Séance’: une introduction,” 34; Malti-Douglas, “Structure and Organization,” 228.

38.
As Hilary Kilpatrick notes, “The principle of oral transmission, whether real or fictitious, has been abandoned, except where it occurs within the sources used; the written word and the spoken are now on an equal footing as sources.” Kilpatrick, “A Genre in Classical Arabic Literature,” 37.

39.
Záhora, “The Tropological Universe,” 46.

40.
Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr,* 2:397–400; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, 2:16–17; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*, 3:365–66. His nickname, al-Waṭwāṭ (the Bat), may have been given to him because of his preference for working at night, rather than the ophthalmic condition that led him to avoid sunlight (see Ghersetti, “On Mamluk Anthologies Again,” 73–74). Nonetheless, he was teased about his sensitive eyes by many many of his contemporaries; see, for instance, the couplet by Ibn Dāniyāl quoted by al-Ṣafadī (*Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, 2:398).

41.
Al-Waṭwāṭ, *Ghurar al-khaṣāʾiṣ*.

42.
There is no critical edition of the complete *Delightful Concepts*. A facsimile of an early manuscript copy was published by Fuat Sezgin in 1990 (see bibliography). The third and fourth books on animals and plants have been published separately: on animals, see al-Waṭwāṭ, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*; on plants, see al-Waṭwāṭ, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*. An edition of the sections dealing with the geography of Egypt has also been published: al-Shāmī, *Min Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*, 7–15.

43.
See al-Ghazzi, “Kitāb Nuzhat al-ʿuyūn fī arbaʿa funūn”; Ghersetti, “On Mamluk Anthologies Again”; al-Mārūnī al-Ḥalabī, “al-Manāhij fī waṣf *al-Mabāhij*.”

44.
The chief judge in question was Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn al-Khuwayyi (d. 693/1294), on whom see al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī,* 2:137–39. Apparently, al-Waṭwāṭ also ran afoul of another important judge, the well-known historian and chancery official Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir (d. 692/1292). According to al-Ṣafadī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir had contributed two letters to al-Waṭwāt’s anthology, *ʿAyn al-futuwwa wa-mirʾāt al-muruwwa*—one in favor of al-Waṭwāṭ and one against him—but he apparently disliked al-Waṭwāṭ so much that he went out of his way to disparage him in a letter of investiture that he wrote for one Ibn Ghurāb. See al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, 2:398–99.

45.
The page and volume numbers in this table refer to the facsimile edition published by Fuat Sezgin.

46.
Al-Mārūnī, "al-Manāhij fī waṣf *al-Mabāhij*," 780.

47.
Krachkovskiĭ, *Taʾrīkh al-adab al-jughrāfī al-ʿarabī*, 406–10.

48.
See also Chapoutot-Remadi, "al-Nuwayrī," *EI2*; Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 103; al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī*, 149, 170, 177.

49.
See, for example, Esperonnier, "Al-Nuwayrī: Les fêtes islamiques, persanes, chrétiennes et juives," who methodically traces al-Nuwayrī's sources in §1.3.4 but was not aware that most of these sources were copied wholesale from *Delightful Concepts*. Jamāl al-Dīn lists al-Nuwayrī's sources in books 1, 3, and 4 without recognizing that most of them had come to the *Ultimate Ambition* by way of *Delightful Concepts* (see Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 137–53). She also presents an analysis of the "*dīwān*" of the *Ultimate Ambition*, arguing that al-Nuwayrī's eclectic selections reflect his vast readings of poetry anthologies. Here again, much of the poetry in these particular books came from al-Waṭwāṭ's work. In general, al-Nadwī is more cognizant of the extent of al-Nuwayrī's debt to al-Waṭwāṭ, but he too assumes that book 4 drew on *Delightful Concepts* only for its poetry; see al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī,* 177.

50.
See Kruk, "Elusive Giraffes: Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir's *Badāʾiʿ al-akwān* and Other Animal Books"; Kruk, "Hedgehogs and Their 'Chicks'"; Kruk, "Some Late Mediaeval Zoological Texts and Their Sources"; Kruk, "*Zarāfa:* Encounters with the Giraffe"; Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*.

51.
Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt*; see also von Hees, *Enzyklopädie als Spiegel des Weltbildes*; von Hees, "Al-Qazwīnī's *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt.*"

52.
This work is unpublished; see Kruk, "Elusive Giraffes."

53.
The lack of medical material from Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine* means that al-Nuwayrī did not rely on this text for his Ibn Sīnā citations.

54.
Kruk, "*Zarāfa*," 587.

55.
This work is unpublished. Maria Kowalska suggests that it is based on al-Qazwīnī and al-Waṭwāṭ and also states: "Derenbourgh might be right in his assumption that Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad b. Saʿīd b. Muḥammad ʿImād al-Dīn b. al-Athīr (1254–99) might be possibly considered as the author of *Tuḥfat al-ʿajāʾib wa-ṭurfat al-gharāʾib*" (citing Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* 1:341; supp. vol. 1, 581); see Kowalska, "Remarks on the Unidentified Cosmography *Tuḥfat al-gharāʾib*." On the other hand, Remke Kruk follows Ahlwardt's assessment that the work was written at

some point between 1318–72; see Ahlwardt, *Die Handschriften-verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin,* viii, 457.

56.
Kruk, "Hedgehogs," 223–24; Kruk, "Some Late Mediaeval Zoological Texts," 423–24.

57.
Ullmann believes that Ibn al-Athīr (who is not any of the three famous brothers known by this name) copied Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir's work for the zoological portion of his compilation; see Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*, 38. See also Remke Kruk, "Elusive Giraffes," 53, 56.

58.
If Remke Kruk is correct, the works of al-Waṭwāṭ and Ibn al-Athīr (which are both organized using a four-part structure) may have been influenced by al-Qazwīnī's text.

59.
Incidentally, book 2 and book 5 each have two chapters that collectively make up around 40% of each book: §2.3.6 (on music) and §2.5.14 (on scribes and secretaryship) for book 2 and §5.5.1 (on the Prophet Muḥammad's biography) and §5.5.12 (on Egyptian history) in book 5.

60.
The first twenty-nine chapters are arranged alphabetically (with an extra one on proverbs beginning with the word *lā*). The final five follow a thematic pattern. See *Nihāya*, 3:1–115 (DKI: 3:8–111, §2.2.1.7.1–§2.2.1.7.34).

61.
See for example *Nihāya,* 4:76 (DKI: 4:74, §2.3.4): "On wine and its prohibition, afflictions (*āfāt*), crimes (*jināyāt*), and names. And on the stories of those who abstained from it during the Jāhiliyya and those among the nobles who were punished for [consuming] it, on those who were famous for drinking wine, and behaved dissolutely in public because of it. And on the good poetry declaimed about it, and the descriptions of its instruments and containers, and what has been said about pursuing pleasure, and descriptions of the drinking soirées (*al-majālis*), and other things along these lines."

62.
Nihāya, 13:2–3 (DKI: 13–2). On al-Nuwayrī's dynastic approach to historiography, see Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," 315; Little, *Introduction to Mamluk Historiography,* 31.

63.
Muhanna, "Ibn Faḍlallāh."

64.
van Berkel, "Opening Up a World of Knowledge," 369.

65.
van Berkel, "Al-Qalqashandī," 337–38; see also van Berkel, "The Attitude towards Knowledge in Mamlūk Egypt."

66.
See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 1:78; 2:132; 3:410, 528, 553; 4:36; 6:226, 317, 369.

See also Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 114–16.

67.
Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 1:32.

68.
Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit."

69.
Rowson, "An Alexandrian Age in Fourteenth-Century Damascus."

70.
Bauer, "Anthologies A. Arabic Literature; 2. Post-Mongol Period," *EI3*.

71.
See Rowson, "An Alexandrian Age in Fourteenth-Century Damascus"; Tuttle, "Expansion and Digression."

72.
Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, 87–94; Haarmann, "Auflösung und Bewahrung"; Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit*; Radtke, "Die Literarisierung der Mamlukischen Historiografie."

73.
Guo, "The Middle Baḥrī Mamluks in Medieval Syrian Historiography," abstract.

74.
van Berkel, "A Well-Mannered Man of Letters," 92. See also Gilbert, "Institutionalization of Muslim Scholarship."

75.
Al-Qadi, "Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community."

76.
See Fleisch, "al-Fīrūzābādī."

CHAPTER THREE. SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

1.
Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah,* 3:315. I am grateful to Sonja Brentjes for her comments on this chapter. All errors are mine.

2.
Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 3:288–91. Carl Petry reports that "a survey of texts mastered by individuals departing from the college (madrasa) whom [the fifteenth-century Mamluk scholar] al-Sakhāwī described as qualified for teaching . . . revealed more than 1,100 items," including texts on "the Koranic sciences, Prophetic traditions, jurisprudence, grammar, rhetoric, literature, geography, history, philosophy/logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences." See Petry, "Scholarly Stasis in Medieval Islam Reconsidered," 323–24.

3.
For a discussion of this trope as it appears throughout classical Arabic literature and historiography, see Rosenthal, “Of Making Many Books There Is No End.” For approaches to dealing with textual overabundance in the European context, see Blair, “Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload ca. 1550–1700”; Blair, *Too Much to Know*.

4.
Speiser, “The Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Madrasah in Cairo”; see also al-Harithy, “The Patronage of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn”; Meinecke-Berg, “Quellen zur Topographie und Baugeschichte in Kairo unter Sultan an-Nasir Muhammad b. Qala’un.”

5.
For a rich treatment of historical data on Ayyūbid and Mamluk-era madrasas, see Miura, *Dynamism in the Urban Society of Damascus*, 22–49. Mahmood Ibrahim argues that “by the middle of the fourteenth century there were nearly a hundred madrasahs in Damascus, large and small. Al-Nuʿaymī (d. 978/1570) lists 152 madrasahs in Damascus, other than the 500 or so mosques and the numerous *ribāt*s and *khānqāh*s, where instruction, usually of a Sufi orientation, also took place. The greater majority of these institutions were founded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. That the institution had become so ubiquitous in the Islamic world is indicated by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), who lists 73 madrasahs on the Cairo street known as Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, the site of the old Fatimid palace.” See Ibrahim, “Practice and Reform in Fourteenth-Century Damascene Madrasas,” 78–79.

6.
On the historical development of the madrasa, which remains the subject of considerable debate, see especially: Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power*; Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*; Messick, *The Calligraphic State*; Pedersen and Makdisi, “Madrasa”; Tibawi, “Origin and Character of al-Madrasah.” On the phenomenon of *waqf* in medieval Egypt, see Amin, *al-Awqāf wa-l-ḥayāt al-ijtimāʿiyya fī Miṣr*; Amin, *Catalogue des documents d’archives du Caire de 239/853 a 922/1516*; Berkey, “Mamluks and the World of Higher Islamic Education”; Petry, “A Paradox of Patronage during the Later Mamluk Period.”

7.
For different views on this question see Berkey, “Mamluks and the World of Higher Islamic Education”; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*; Lev, “Symbiotic Relations”; Petry, “A Paradox of Patronage”; Petry, “Scholarly Stasis in Medieval Islam Reconsidered.”

8.
Berkey, “Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages”; Berkey, “Tadrīs,” *EI2*; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*. Daphna Ephrat has similarly argued that, in eleventh-century Baghdad, madrasas played a less vital role in the formation of ʿulamāʾ identity than the *ḥalqa,* the traditional locus of Islamic education; see Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*.

9.
Petry argues that the biographical literature of the period demonstrates that certain institutions are cited more frequently than others and that some madrasas were magnets for students seeking certain types of instruction; see Petry, “Educational Institutions as

Depicted in the Biographical Literature of Mamluk Cairo."

10.
Petry, "Some Observations on the Position of the Librarian," 17.

11.
As noted by Amīna Jamāl al-Dīn, the dream that al-Nuwayrī has in 730 AH is set at the Nāṣiriyya, which may indicate that he was living there at the end of his life. See Jamāl al-Dīn, *Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 29–30; *Nihāya*, 33:216.

12.
Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2:234–40, fig. 137 and pls. 85–89a, 111c, and 124d; Mayer et al., "Archäologische Untersuchungen und Restaurierungsarbeiten an der Madrasa des Sultan an-Nasir Muhammad," 219–38, pls. 32–37; Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, 88; Speiser, "Restaurierungsarbeiten an der al-Nasriyya Madrasa in Kairo," 527–40, pls. 1–4 and figs. 1–2; Speiser, "The Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Madrasah in Cairo," 197.

13.
Nihāya, 32:62 (DKI: 32:42–43).

14.
Nihāya, 32:62 (DKI: 32:43).

15.
This event also reveals the extent of the powers of the *wakīl al-khāṣṣ*, who was capable of circumventing the wishes of a powerful chief judge who had held office for decades. Ibn ʿUbāda's powers were a foreshadowing of the tremendous authority that his successor Karīm al-Dīn al-Kabīr would wield as *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*.

16.
Nihāya, 32:64–74 (DKI: 32:44–51); 33:75–76 (DKI: 33:58).

17.
Nihāya, 32:63 (DKI: 32:43). In the following volume, al-Nuwayrī returns to the subject of the Nāṣiriyya's finances in his obituary for the madrasas's negligent overseer, a man he describes as wicked and greedy: "When he took over the Nāṣiriyya, he prevented any inspectors from examining its deed, and he did not follow the conditions of its founder, giving the jurists and the teaching assistants half of what was earmarked for them in the deed. When he died and control was passed on to the sultan's governor Sayf al-Dīn Arghun al-Nāṣirī, he made the deed public, carried out what the sultan had stipulated, increased the number of jurists, and doubled their stipends, may God reward him" (*Nihāya*, 33:76 [DKI: 33:59]).

18.
"A *marsūm* [decree] arrived in Damascus in early Dhū al-Ḥijjah 727. Shortly thereafter, on Friday, 6 Dhū al-Ḥijjah, the governor assembled the four chief judges, other teachers, and Sufis, and had the sultan's letter read to the gathering. The letter asked that the deed document (*waqfīyah*) of each madrasah, inside and outside of the Damascus city walls, must be examined to make sure that the madrasah functioned exactly as stipulated in the document. Anyone who did not meet the qualifications (*shurūṭ*) stipulated by the benefactor must be dismissed. Only those who met the stipulations, including those who held non-teaching positions, could be retained. A 'committee' made up of the four chief

judges, the treasurer (*wakīl bayt al-māl*), the supervisor and the inspector of the endowments (*nāẓir al-awqāf wa-mushidduhā*), the accounts controller (*mustawfī*), and a group of *fuqahāʾ* and teachers began a systematic reading of all the *waqfīyah*s, an activity that took place everyday between the noon prayer and the afternoon prayer until the month of Ṣafar the following year." Ibrahim, "Practice and Reform," 81.

19.
See *Nihāya*, 32:60–74 (DKI: 32:41–52).

20.
One of the upholsterers is specifically mentioned by name (al-Ḥājj Ṣabīḥ al-Quṭbī), suggesting that he may have had a personal relationship with the author of the endowment deed.

21.
This line item is listed in the deed as one thousand dirhams per month for each professor, his staff of clerks and teaching assistants (*muʿīd, dāʿī, naqīb*), and his students. As discussed above, the Nāṣiriyya had at least four main professors, one for each school of law (and the initial appointees are specified in the *waqf* document). The professor earned two hundred *dirhams* per month, and the clerks and students divided the remaining eight hundred *dirhams*.

22.
The cattle-driver was in charge of the ox that ran the waterwheel that brought water to the madrasas's courtyard, fountain, garden, etc.

23.
This figure is based on a list of revenue sources assigned to the Nāṣiriyya's *waqf*, among them: the Qaysariyyat Amīr (1,659 *dirhams* per month); the adjoining hall (forty-eight *dirhams*); a famous *khān* in Damascus (earning seventy thousand *dirhams* per year of which al-Nāsir's share amounted to about four thousand *dirhams* per month). See *Nihāya*, 32:70 (DKI: 32:50).

24.
See Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2:234.

25.
See chapter 4 for a discussion of the meeting that al-Nuwayrī convened in his room at the Nāṣiriyya in 705 AH, bringing together several leading scholars to discuss Ibn Taymiyya's writings on the names and attributes of God. The meeting led to Ibn Taymiyya being summoned to Cairo to explain his views. See also Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 57–58; Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," 315; *Nihāya*, 32:99 (DKI: 32:71).

26.
Petry, "Scholarly Stasis," 324.

27.
The Nāṣiriyya was part of a "collegiate cluster," which Carl Petry has referred to as "the primary scholastic enterprise of the religio-academic establishment in Cairo." Along with the other madrasas in the neighborhood, the Nāṣiriyya was an institutional home for "perhaps a majority of the most eminent scholars in Cairo during the Mamluk period." See Petry, "Educational Institutions," 109.

28.
Ibrahim has written about individuals who taught across disciplinary boundaries in fourteenth-century madrasas, such as al-Ṭuyūrī al-Ḥāsib, "a professional witness specializing in assessing property values . . . who started out teaching in a *maktab* but eventually had a study circle (*ḥalqah*) in the Umayyad Mosque, [where he taught] calculus, algebra, *muqābalah* (collating, equations), and geometry." Other teachers included Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, a "timekeeper, astrologer, astronomer, and maker of astrolabes." See Ibrahim, "Practice and Reform," 74.

29.
See Northrup, "Qalāwūn's Patronage of the Medical Sciences in Thirteenth-Century Egypt"; Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital*, 89–138, 176–222; Chipman, *The World of Pharmacy and Pharmacists in Mamlūk Cairo*, 137–39.

30.
Nihāya, 31:106–8 (DKI: 31:71–73).

31.
A contemporary of al-Nuwayrī's, the physician Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, known as Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 1348), also worked at the hospital and went on to compose an encyclopedic text that would serve as a basis for Tāshköprüzādeh's *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda* and al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*. See Witkam, *De egyptische arts Ibn al-Akfānī*; Witkam, "Ibn al-Akfānī."

32.
Two examples of this interposition are the magpie (*ṣurad*) and the gyrfalcon (*sunqur*), which al-Nuwayrī says many previous writers neglected to discuss in their chapters on carnivorous birds.

33.
On Ibn Abī Ḥulayqa, see Northrup, "Qalāwūn's Patronage of the Medical Sciences."

34.
On the Fārūq theriac, see Mayor, *The Poison King*, 244–45; Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium*.

35.
On viper pastilles in ancient Greek and medieval Arabic toxicology, see Kahl, "Two Antidotes from the 'Empiricals' of Ibn at-Tilmīḏ."

36.
See *Nihāya*, 10:135 (DKI: 10:80–81). See also the following subchapter (*Nihāya*, 10:141–42 [DKI: 10:84–85]), in which al-Nuwayrī casts doubt on Ibn Sīnā's view that snake meat lengthens life and preserves youth and vigor.

37.
Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital,* 106–8.

38.
Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital*, 133–34.

39.

Even in cases where a full or partial citation is given, one cannot always assume that al-Nuwayrī consulted the source directly, as he tended to preserve citations found within the sources he copied. For example, in his discussion of celestial temples (§1.1.4.18), al-Nuwayrī cites al-Masʿūdī's *Fields of Gold* as part of a larger passage taken from al-Waṭwāṭ's *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts*. Just a few pages earlier, he quotes al-Shahrastānī's heresiographical work, *The Book of Religious Groups and Sects* (*Kitāb al-milal wa-l-niḥal*), in a passage that does not appear in al-Waṭwāṭ's text. See *Nihāya*, 1:57 (DKI: 1:50–51), 1:61–62 (DKI: 1:54–56) for the two relevant passages.

40.
See Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 159–63; al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī*, 181–88. See Anna Katharina Angermann, "Kompilation als narrative Strategie" for a careful reconstruction of the sources of al-Nuwayrī's history of the Mongols.

41.
See Antrim, "Place and Belonging," 328–42.

42.
On the dog, see *Nihāya*, 9:253–70 (DKI: 9:155–59); hyena, 9:274–76 (DKI: 9:167–69); snake, 10:133–46 (DKI: 10:79–84).

43.
On the gestation period of the pig, see *Nihāya,* 9:299–300 (DKI: 9:182); on the lineage of the giraffe, see 9:317–18 (DKI: 9:193–94).

44.
There are a few species that are only found in a single work. Al-Waṭwāṭ has chapters on lentils, cumin, lettuce, thyme, and coriander, which are not given separate treatments in the *Nihāya*. Al-Nuwayrī discusses purslane, sorrel, and celery, which are not in *Delightful Concepts*. Al-Waṭwāṭ's discussions of the almond, walnut hazelnut, palm tree, and olive are substantially larger and quite different from al-Nuwayrī's (but mostly contain the same poetry). Al-Nuwayrī discusses the rose at greater length than al-Waṭwāṭ and divides his discussion of aromatics into those that can and cannot be distilled, while *Delightful Concepts* groups them all under the term *rayāḥīn*.

45.
Ibn al-Baṣṣāl, *Libro de agricultura*. Al-Waṭwāṭ's excerpts from Ibn al-Baṣṣāl are typically related to the kinds of soil suitable for different kinds of plants.

46.
The following caveats should be borne in mind when consulting this table. (1) The sources listed are those I have been able to cross-reference against a facsimile edition of Delightful Concepts and two uncritical editions of its last two funūn. (2) Under the heading "sources not transmitted by al-Waṭwāṭ," I assume that these sources are not used in Delightful Concepts because they are not explicitly quoted and because I could not find the same passages in the Ultimate Ambition. (3) By the same token, the texts listed under "other sources" may not all appear in Delightful Concepts; some certainly do (and I make a note of that in several places). However, I've generally pursued a fairly conservative approach. In the interest of saving space, I have generally only given the Arabic titles of these works.

47.
Given that al-Maydānī is al-Nuwayrī's major source for the proverbial material in book

2, I have assumed that this text is also the source for the proverbial chapters in books 1, 3, and 4.

48.
These sources are mostly present in al-Waṭwāṭ, but also include some that I have not been able to cross-reference. Al-Nadwī adds these additional texts: Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Taqwīm al-buldān*; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*; Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *Kitāb al-kharāj*; al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, and a few others, none of which I have been able to confirm.

49.
This text is unpublished; al-Nuwayrī believes that it is by al-Thaʿālibī, but the volume editor is dubious.

50.
Also known as *al-Tabaṣṣur fī al-tijāra*.

51.
This book may be extant in manuscript, but I have not been able to find a record of it.

52.
On this epistle, al-Nuwayrī writes: "I have not found, among everything I have researched on this topic, anything more complete than this text, and it is something that a scribe can draw upon for help in writing epistles [on this subject]." The epistle describes a hunting trip and all the *ṭuyūr al-wājib*, "the fourteen obligatory birds required for scoring points in competition." See *Nihāya*, 10:328 (DKI: 10:198).

53.
This is how al-Nuwayrī refers to this author; cf. Giffen, "al-Shayzarī.

54.
This epistle was composed in the year 706/1306. See *Nihāya*, 11:207 (DKI: 11:136).

55.
This text could be any of various works by this author that have been lost, but it is probably the one that has been preserved, a large compilation entitled *Kitāb al-taṣrīf li-man ʿajiza ʿan al-taʾlīf* ("The Arrangement [of Medical Knowledge] for One Who Is Unable to Compile [a Manual for Himself]"). See Savage-Smith, "al-Zahrāwī."

56.
According to Aḥmad Zakī Pāsha, principal editor of the *Ultimate Ambition*, al-Nuwayrī abridged the first nine chapters of this work, which is no longer extant. See the editor's introduction to the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya edition, volume 12. Al-Tamīmī's (d. 380/990) main source was Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb, also known as al-Yaʿqūbī, who lived two generations before him and transmitted his knowledge to al-Tamīmī's grandfather. The *Jayb al-ʿarūs* (also known as *Ṭīb al-ʿarūs*) transmits al-Yaʿqūbī's material, as well as material from Muḥammad b. ʿAbbās al-Miskī, Ḥusayn b. Yazīd al-Sīrāfī and Yūḥannā b. Māsawayh, a book called *Kitāb al-ʿiṭr* in the Bakhtishūʿ tradition, and Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī. See also Minorsky, *Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir Marvazī on China, the Turks, and India*, 91.

57.
Al-Nuwayrī refers to this source in the introduction to book 4 without mentioning its

author, referring to him only as al-Ḥakīm, which could also be a reference to Aristotle. See *Nihāya*, 11:2 (DKI: 11:4).

58.
This text is presumably Ibn al-Tilmīdh's *Aqrābādhīn* (Medical Dispensatory); see Oliver Kahl, *The Dispensatory of Ibn al-Tilmīdh*.

59.
This may be Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿAshshāb (d. 1101), the author of *al-Mughnī fī tadbīr al-amrāḍ wa-maʿrifat al-ʿilal wa-l-amrāḍ*, a text on medicinal plants.

60.
Al-Waṭwāṭ acknowledges this text as one of his main sources in *Delightful Concepts* §4.0.

61.
The differences in the first chapters of the two works are emblematic of the overall difference in approach. Both authors begin with the same quote from al-Masʿūdī's *Fields of Gold,* which explains the origin of plant life through the story of God giving Adam the seedlings for thirty different plants. Al-Nuwayrī then produces a few more reports in the same vein while al-Waṭwāṭ branches off to an excerpt from Ibn Waḥshiyya's *Nabataean Agriculture*, which he labels *al-qawl al-ʿaqlī* (the rational view). According to this view, the creation of plants (*ḥudūth al-nabāt*) is contingent (*jawāz*) and not pre-ordained (*wujūb*), in the sense that their nature depends on the mixing of seeds with certain kinds of soil and water. Al-Waṭwāṭ was taken with this idea and devotes a considerable discussion to different types of soil and climates (see *Delightful Concepts* §4.2) that al-Nuwayrī does not put in the *Ultimate Ambition* (see 11:117 [DKI: 11:79]). The thirty seedlings mentioned by al-Masʿūdī include ten with husks: walnut (*jawz*), almond (*lawz*), hazelnut (*jillawz*), pistachio (*fustuq*), acorn (*ballūṭ*), chestnut (*shāh ballūṭ*), pine (*ṣanawbar*), bitter orange (*nāranj*), pomegranate (*rummān*), and poppy (*khashkhāsh*); ten with stones: olive (*zaytūn*), date (*ruṭab*), apricot (*mishmish*), peach (*khawkh*), plum (*ijjāṣ*), sorb apple (*ghubayrāʾ*), lotus-fruit (*nabiq*), jujube (*ʿunnāb*), sebesten-plum (*mukhayyaṭ*), and azarole (*zuʿrūr*); and ten with neither husk nor seed: apple (*tuffāḥ*), quince (*safarjal*), pear (*kummathrā*), grape (*ʿinab*), fig (*tīn*), citron (*utrujj*), carob (*khurnūb*), mulberry (*tūt*), cucumber (*qiththāʾ*), and melon (*biṭṭīkh*).

62.
On al-Nuwayrī's approach to history, see Amitai, "Al-Nuwayrī as a Historian of the Mongols"; Ashtor, "Some Unpublished Sources for the Baḥrī Period"; Cahen, "Mea culpa sur Jazarī/Nuwayrī"; Elham, *Kitbugā und Lāǧīn*, 27–37, 38–43, 54–61, 68–73; Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies," 32; Haarmann, "L'édition de la chronique Mamlūke syrienne de Šams al-dīn Muḥammad al-Ǧazarī"; Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit*; ʿInān, *Muʾarrikhū Miṣr al-Islāmiyya*, 62–75; Kortantamer, *Ägypten und Syrien zwischen 1317 und 1341*, 24–27; Little, *Introduction to Mamluk Historiography*, 24–32.

63.
See also Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 159–63; al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī*, 181–88.

64.
This question raises two other questions: (1) Why did al-Nuwayrī select these particular topics, and not others, to represent the category of adab? (2) What was his criterion for

choosing these specific sources as the most authoritative books on those topics? The first question is addressed in chapter 2. The second question is more difficult to resolve because al-Nuwayrī is not consistent in explaining his reasons for using a particular source. One exception is chapter §2.1.4 ("on genealogy," see *Nihāya,* 2:276 [DKI: 2:295–296]). In his introduction to the chapter, al-Nuwayrī identifies his source as al-Jawwānī's *Muqaddima* and states that he is using this work because its author truly grasped his subject. Another example is subchapter §2.3.1.16 ("on apology and entreaty"). Here, al-Nuwayrī begins with an interesting structural observation. He says that he has seen various litterateurs (*ahl al-adab*) connect apology and entreaty with the topic of praise, which is why he has done the same. He names Ibn Ḥamdūn's *Tadhkira* as an example; see *Nihāya*, 3:258–65 (DKI: 3:241–46).

65.
Nihāya, §2.5.14.

66.
Nihāya, §1.3.1.16 (al-Babbaghāʾ on time-keeping instruments); §1.4.5.6 (on mountains); §1.4.6.13–15 (on the sea and ships, by Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Abū ʿĀmir b. ʿUqāl al-Andalusī, and Ibn al-ʿAmīd); §3.3.1.2.3 (Tāj al-Dīn al-Yamānī on horses), and others.

67.
Nihāya, §2.5.1–§2.5.13. Note that al-Nuwayrī also makes the case in the preface to book 5 that the study of history is of special interest to rulers and their advisors.

68.
Nihāya, 9:214–23 (DKI: 9:133–37).

69.
Nihāya, §2.3.6. On al-Nuwayrī's methods of abridging this text, see al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī*, ch. 4, sec. 4.

70.
See, for example, *Nihāya* §2.3.2.12 ("on the stories of deserters who justified fleeing from battle, despite its baseness").

71.
Nihāya, §2.3.3.2 ("On the Prophet's Companions who were famous for joking"). This subchapter contains amusing stories about Nuʿaymān, one of the Companions at the Battle of Badr.

72.
Nihāya, §2.2.3.

73.
Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit."

74.
Bauer, "Anthologies," *EI3*. One index of the rising significance of adab during the Ayyūbid era is the high proportion of literary texts found in libraries at this time. See Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library*, 102–10.

75.
Larkin, "Popular Poetry in the Post-Classical Period, 1150–1850."

76.
Bauer, “In Search of ‘Post-Classical Literature,’” 154–55.

77.
Irwin, “Mamluk Literature,” 9.

78.
Rowson, “Alexandrian Age,” 110.

79.
Bauer, “Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches,” 110.

80.
See *Nihāya*, 29:72–75 (DKI: 29:46–48). The madrasa in question is not named but is referred to as the one endowed by the Ayyūbid governor Ibrāhīm b. Shurūh. The official that ʿImād al-Dīn al-Sukkarī refused to appoint was the judge of Qūṣ, who is also not named.

81.
See *Nihāya*, 29:74 (DKI: 29:46): *ikhtaṣṣa bi-khidmatihi . . . fa-kāna akhaṣṣa al-nās bihi wa-aʿlāhum manzilatan ʿindahu*.

82.
Nihāya, 29:74–75 (DKI: 29:47).

83.
Nihāya, 29:75 (DKI: 29:48); *hādhihi al-ḥikāya alladhī dhakartuhā lā ashukku fīhā wa-lā artābu, wa-hiya mashhūra yaʿrifuhā kathīr min al-nās*.

84.
Ultimate Ambition, 266–67.

85.
Ultimate Ambition, 179.

86.
Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps*, 1–2. Emilie Savage-Smith has similarly proposed that “all pre-modern maps of the Mediterranean Sea were part of what in Europe came to be called ‘the art of memory’—that is, they were a means of schematically structuring and remembering constellations of ideas . . . In early Islamic maps, the visualization of approximate boundaries between peoples and realms vis-à-vis the four cardinal directions appears the primary purpose, along with increasing interest in naming ports and major inland settlements . . . The rise of portolan charts—beginning with the eleventh-century Egyptian proto-portolan diagram and flourishing at workshops in Catalonia, Italy, and Istanbul during the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries—reflects increased interest in maps illustrating travel, trade, and naval expeditions. To what extent any of these early maps were of use to a sailor on board ship or to a roving landlubber is, however, questionable. Even the impressive portolan charts, both European and Ottoman, in the form in which they are preserved today, are more statements of power and dominion than useful nautical guides for navigating the Mediterranean Sea.” See Savage-Smith, “Cartography,” 195. I am grateful to Sonja Brentjes for this reference.

87.
On Ibn Waḥshiyya, see Hämeem-Anttila, "Ibn Waḥshiyya and Magic." The text that al-Nuwaryī cites may exist in manuscripts under a different name: *Asrār al-falak fī aḥkām al-nujūm*; see Hämeem-Anttila, *The Last Pagans of Iraq*, 361.

88.
Nihāya, 11:48 (DKI: 11:38). The term *liḥyat al-tays* also refers to the plant salsify (i.e., goatsbeard, *Tragopogon porrifolius*). In this case, because Ibn Waḥshiyya specifically uses the word "hair" (*shaʿr*), it seems he is referring to an actual goat's beard.

89.
Nihāya, 11:55 (DKI: 11:41).

90.
Nihāya, 11:92 (DKI: 11:62).

91.
See Chapoutot-Remadi, "L'agriculture de l'Empire Mamluk au Moyen Age d'après al-Nuwayrī"; Tsugitaka, "Fiscal Administration in Syria during the Reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad."

92.
Nihāya, 11:1–4 (DKI: 11:2–3).

93.
"Dicere etiam solebat nullum esse librum tam malum ut non aliqua parte prodesset." Pliny the Younger, *Letters and Panegyricus*, 1:176–77.

94.
Blair, "Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopaedism."

95.
See *Nihāya*, 4:133–68 (DKI: 4:134–61). ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Nadwī finds this tendency to be problematic. While al-Nuwayrī, he says, does not quote ḥadīths that go against the pillars of Islam or other religious topics, he is not opposed to quoting them in other areas. Al-Nadwī proposes that this is because the ʿulamāʾ permitted argumentation on the basis of weak or forged hadiths as long as it did not violate a matter of widespread consensus, especially on issues unconnected with religion, like adab. See al-Nadwī, *Manhaj al-Nuwayrī,* 109–10.

96.
Examples of historians with ḥadīth training include Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, the brother of al-Bukhārī's redactor, who came from a family of ḥadīth specialists. Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī attended the lectures of al-Nuwayrī's ḥadīth teacher Wazīra bt. Munajjā (see *Nihāya*, 32:235 [DKI: 32:188]). Al-Birzālī was, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the scholar who instilled in him the interest in studying ḥadīth (see Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, 78). Many other examples of the importance of ḥadīth to Mamluk-era compilers and especially historians could be cited. For studies relevant to the epistemological dimensions of ḥadīth, see Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, 42–46, 262–99; Brown, "Did the Prophet Say It or Not?"; Brown, "How We Know Early Ḥadīth Critics Did *Matn* Criticism and Why It's So Hard to Find"; Hallaq, "The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pseudo-Problem"; Weiss, *The Search for*

God's Law, 259–321; Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 17–46.

97.
Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, 1:108.

98.
Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 1:31.

99.
Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 1:33–34.

100.
Berkey, "Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East," 39–40. Berkey further argues: "In the end, the tension between tradition and custom, between *sunna* and *bidʿa*, points to a fluidity and a creativity within the social process of constructing knowledge in the medieval Islamic world. . . . The close and apparently symbiotic (or at least unproblematic) relationship of two very different cultural processes, in an institution established specifically to support the transmission of knowledge, poses fundamental questions about the character of that 'knowledge' which medieval Islamic societies prized so highly—questions, that is, about its relationship to broader patterns of cultural life" (40).

101.
Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 102–32, at 128.

102.
Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 356–57.

CHAPTER FOUR. EMPIRE AND ENCYCLOPEDISM

1.
On Ibn Taymiyya's trials, see Bori, "A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya"; Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya"; Murad, "Ibn Taymiya on Trial."

2.
Ultimate Ambition, 277–78.

3.
Ultimate Ambition, 278. I am grateful to Jon Hoover for his insight on this fatwa.

4.
For a detailed discussion of this fatwa, see Bori, "Theology, Politics, Society."

5.
Ultimate Ambition, 279.

6.
Ultimate Ambition, 279–80.

7.

On the more famous Damascus trials, see Sherman Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial in Damascus."

8.
On Ibn Makhlūf, see Escovitz, "Patterns of Appointment to the Chief Judgeships of Cairo during the Baḥrī Mamlūk Period," 151–52.

9.
See chapter 1.

10.
König and Whitmarsh, "Ordering Knowledge," 3, 38.

11.
König and Whitmarsh, "Ordering Knowledge," 30.

12.
Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 24–25.

13.
Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture*.

14.
Magdalino, "Byzantine Encyclopaedism of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries."

15.
Zurndorfer, "The Passion to Collect, Select, and Protect."

16.
Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, 178.

17.
Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 200–215.

18.
Flinterman and Van Steenbergen, "Al-Nasir Muhammad and the Formation of the Qalawunid State."

19.
Flinterman and Van Steenbergen, "Al-Nasir Muhammad and the Formation of the Qalawunid State," 108.

20.
Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 183.

21.
Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought,* 184.

22.
Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 184.

23.
Particularly in the fourteenth century, which represented "the height of prosperity and

stability in medieval Syria," Antrim argues that the region's inhabitants conceived of themselves "as belonging to and in an empire billed as Dar al-Islam [the Abode of Islam]." See Antrim, "Place and Belonging in Medieval Syria," 280–81, 328–43.

24.
Khalidi recognizes this as a possible factor, but does not dwell on it at length: "Archival and diplomatic material is more consistently quoted, lending these histories a documentary authority derived in a great many instances from direct experience of government among the historians themselves" (*Arabic Historical Thought,* 184).

25.
See chapter 3.

26.
Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, 3:24.

27.
Most of the studies on this topic have focused on the administration of the Circassian period. See Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten*; Björkman, "Diplomatic," *EI2*; Escovitz, "Vocational Patterns of the Scribes of the Mamlūk Chancery"; Gottschalk, "Dīwān, ii. Egypt, (4) The Mamlūk Period," *EI2*; Holt, "A Chancery Clerk in Medieval Egypt"; Imamuddin, "Diwān al-Inshāʾ"; Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration dans l'État militaire mamluk*, especially 40–47 (*dīwān al-inshāʾ*), 47–49 (*dīwān al-jaysh*), 49–53 (*dīwān al-khāṣṣ*), 78–91 (means of access to the bureaucracy), 133–41 (the *kātib* between myth and reality), 142–77 (the clerks and the Mamluk state), and 329–62 (the milieu of notables); Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 200–242; Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt*; van Berkel, "Ibn Khaldun, a Critical Historian at Work"; van Berkel, "A Well-Mannered Man of Letters."

28.
See van Berkel, "A Well-Mannered Man of Letters": "[Regarding] the figure of the *kātib* himself, his background, education and social and cultural position, this rich administrative literature has its limitations. For the authors of these manuals and treatises intend to portray and idealized *kātib* whose merits, erudition and good manners are very often far removed from the historical *kātib* whose image is gleaned from historiographic, polemic and anecdotal literature. Since famous *kuttāb* such as ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Yaḥyā, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239) and al-Qalqashandī were well-versed adībs (men of letters) and set great store to erudition, we are led to believe that all *kuttāb* were like them" (88–89). See also Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration dans l'État militaire mamluk*, 133–41.

29.
Escovitz, "Vocational Patterns," 62.

30.
Escovitz, "Vocational Patterns," 55.

31.
Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Thanāʾ Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān b. Fahd al-Ḥalabī was the head of the chancery in Damascus. Al-Nuwayrī devotes a laudatory obituary to him (*Nihāya,* 33:191 [DKI: 33:145]) in which he says, "were he called 'The Scribe of East and West,' he would have deserved it." See Ibn Fahd al-Ḥalabī, *Ḥusn al-tawassul ilā ṣināʿat al-tarassul*. Thomas Bauer points out: "This celebrated *munshiʾ* was the venerated model

for a whole generation of prose stylists. His proficiency in poetry and prose and his influence as head of the chancellery made him Ibn Nubātah's most important acquaintance during his first years in Damascus." See Bauer, "Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī," 16.

32.
See *Nihāya*, 7:27–35 (DKI: 7:25–31). Mastery of the general topics is essential to the education of any scribe. Failure to do so would mean, as Ibn Fahd puts it, that the aspirant to this craft "would be in one valley, and secretaryship in another" (*Nihāya*, 7:35 [DKI: 7:31]).

33.
Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 1:33.

34.
Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf al-Taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf, 4*: "*wa-nabbahtu fī kull mukātaba ʿalā mā istaqarra ʿalayhi al-ḥāl fīhā ilā ākhir al-dawla al-ashrafiyya al-madhkūra [i.e., 1376] wa-hal hiya mustamirra ilā al-ān am lā*."

35.
The presence of an extra *yāʾ* in the loftier title was indicated with a *shadda*. See Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*, 132–33.

36.
Another example from the *Tathqīf* concerns the appropriate way to address letters to prominent Sufi shaykhs. Using the case of a letter sent to the shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Ṭūṭī, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh considers the wordy title that was used: *al-majlis al-sāmī al-shaykhī al-ajallī al-ʿālimī al-ʿāmilī al-kāmilī al-fāḍilī al-zāhidī al-wariʿī al-ʿābidī al-khāshiʿī al-nāsikī al-qudwī al-awḥadī majd al-islām ḍiyāʾ al-anām baqiyyat al-salaf al-kirām fakhr al-ṣulaḥāʾ awḥad al-kubarāʾ zayn al-zuhhād ʿimād al-ʿubbād qudwat al-mutawarriʿīn dhukhr al-duwal rukn al-mulūk wa-l-salāṭīn*. This, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh says, is the way that this particular shaykh was addressed in the letters he had seen, but that this formulation was a bit unusual and contrary to established practice. In particular, the final epithet "Column of Kings and Sultans" (*rukn al-mulūk wa-l-salāṭīn*) was not customarily used for a Sufi shaykh, who was supposed to be addressed as "Blessing of Kings and Sultans" (*barakat al-mulūk wa-l-salāṭīn*). See Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf*, 69.

37.
Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf*, 137: "*wa-qad kuntu ankartu dhālika li-annahu kāna yuʿaẓẓimuhā kathīran wa-yuqabbilu yadayhā ghāliban fa-kāna yumkinu an yuktaba lahā bi-taqbīl al-yad*."

38.
The most isolated possible instance of *iṣṭilāḥ* would be a practice or term that is used by only one person. I have found such an example in al-Nuwayrī's *Ultimate Ambition*, where he write about the requirement that military scribes never give an accurate figure of the size of an army or a military detachment in case it falls into enemy hands. If he must do it because a governor might ask him about it, al-Nuwayrī says that he should use a secret symbol that "he establishes as a convention with himself alone" (*yaṣṭaliḥu ʿalayhi maʿa nafsihi*) and that no one else knows. See *Nihāya,* 8:158–59.

39.
Al-Nuwayrī's letter of investiture was written by Bahāʾ al-Dīn b. Sallāma, a "clerk of the roll" (*kātib al-darj*), and was dated 22 Jumādā I 701 AH (January 23, 1302 CE). See

Nihāya, 32:14 (DKI: 32:6).

40.
Al-Nuwayrī arrived in Cairo on 27 Ramaḍān 703 AH (May 3, 1304 CE). See *Nihāya*, 32:73, 78 (DKI: 32:51, 54).

41.
Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr*, 521–22.

42.
Ultimate Ambition, 97.

43.
Little, "Notes on the Early *Naẓar al-Khāṣṣ*," 241–42.

44.
See Little, "Coptic Converts to Islam during the Baḥrī Mamluk Period," 272.

45.
Holt, "al-Nāṣir."

46.
See Northrup, "The Baḥrī Mamlūk Sultanate," 264. Gottschalk ("Dīwān," *EI2*) adds the *nāẓir al-māl* (supervisor of the exchequer) to the list of officials inheriting the duties of the viceroy and vizier, but Little considers this figure to be synonymous with the *shadd al-dawāwīn* (see "Notes on the Early *Naẓar al-Khāṣṣ*," 241). The latter reference contains an amusing excerpt from al-Ṣafadī (*Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. 2, 37–38) in which he quotes the last vizier under al-Nāṣir complaining about the diminution of his duties before the abolishment of the office: "I am but a peasant to [the *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*]. I speak to the sultan only about the cheese depot, the apple house, and the processing of dates!"

47.
Al-Nuwayrī left for Tripoli on 15 Muḥarram 710 (June 14, 1310 CE); see *Nihāya*, 32:161 (DKI: 32:122).

48.
Al-Nuwayrī here seeks to demonstrate the importance of accounting (*ḥisāb*) as the basis for financial secretaryship by showing that it is even mentioned in the Quran.

49.
Here al-Nuwayrī locates in the Quranic Joseph—who acted as the superintendent of Egypt's treasuries—a distinguished forefather to all financial clerks.

50.
The point of this ḥadīth is not to demonstrate that Muḥammad was an accountant but rather that he had a knowledge of accounting and was able to determine that Ibn al-Lutbiyya was trying to skim money off the top of the alms.

51.
Nihāya, 8:191–93 (DKI: 8:145–46).

52.
See van Berkel, "A Well-Mannered Man of Letters": "Noteworthy is al-Qalqashandī's

emphasis throughout his text on the social, intellectual, and even moral superiority of the chancery clerk over his colleagues in the other *dīwān*s, especially over the financial *kuttāb*. Wise men and famous predecessors, al-Qalqashandī argues, have generally agreed that the position of chancery clerk is more noble than that of the financial clerk. Apart from being skilled in eloquence, the chancery clerk requires knowledge of other kinds of secretaryship in order to compose documents concerning legal and financial procedures. The work of the financial *kātib,* on the other hand, is only confined to the standard models and descriptions of the financial administration" (92).

53.
Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 1:31.

54.
Nihāya, 8:193 (DKI: 8:146).

55.
Gifts sent to the sultan were usually accompanied by letters describing the contents of the gift, so as to ensure that it was not stolen or replaced with something else. On this subject, see Muhanna, "The Sultan's New Clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk Gift Exchange in the Fifteenth Century."

56.
Ultimate Ambition, 115–16.

57.
Ultimate Ambition, 121.

58.
Nihāya, 9:6 (DKI).

59.
Nihāya, 9:7 (DKI).

60.
Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 324.

61.
Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 203.

CHAPTER FIVE. WORKING METHODS

1.
I am grateful to Élise Franssen and Frédéric Bauden for their comments on this chapter, a version of which will appear in their edited volume, *"In the Author's Hand": Holograph and Authorial Manuscripts in the Islamic Handwritten Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). On the study of manuscript culture, see in particular Déroche, *Islamic Codicology*; Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition*; Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*; Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*; Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*.

2.

Al-Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāliʿ al-saʿīd al-jāmiʿ asmāʾ nujabāʾ al-Ṣaʿīd*, 96–97. Note that al-Udfuwī provides an incorrect name for al-Nuwayrī's grandfather (who was Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Dāʾim), as well as his incorrect birthplace (which was Akhmīm and not Qūṣ).

3.
Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, 1:83. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī draws his biography of al-Nuwayrī from al-Ṣafadī's account; see *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*, 1:209.

4.
Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1349) may be the source of the report about al-Nuwayrī's ability to copy three quires; see Ibn al-Wardī, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, 2:303.

5.
See chapter 3 for a discussion of the endowment deed of the Nāṣiriyya madrasa. On standards of living and salaries in fourteenth-century Egypt, see Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam,* 116–23.

6.
Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 7:165.

7.
Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, *Tadhkirat al-nabīh fī ayyām Manṣūr wa-banīh*, 2:246.

8.
Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 14:164.

9.
Mufaḍḍal b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *al-Nahj al-sadīd wa-l-durr al-farīd*, 55.

10.
Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr*, 521–22. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, 2:363, which has a brief death notice for al-Nuwayrī (identified as "the author of the work of history").

11.
Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī,* 2:115: *jamaʿa al-kathīr wa-nafaʿa al-jamm al-ghafīr, wa-akhthara min al-taṣnīf wa-waffara bi-l-ikhtiṣār mūnat al-taṭwīl fī al-taʾlīf, wa-kataba bi-khaṭṭihi mā lā yuḥṣā*.

12.
Part of this subchapter has unfortunately been lost. It begins *in media res* with an excerpt from *Kitāb al-muʾtalif wa-l-mukhtalif* by ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. Saʿīd al-Azdī (d. 410/1019), followed by a second excerpt from the same author's *Mushtabah al-nisba*, two works that treat the similarities in the names of different ḥadīth transmitters. This suggests that al-Nuwayrī was mainly concerned here with the copying of ḥadīth manuscripts, given the greater space he devotes to this subject in comparison with the material on *naskh al-ʿulūm*.

13.
There is a lacuna in the manuscript here; this is my suggested replacement.

14.

Nihāya, 9:214–18.

15.
See Mostert, "What Happened to Literacy in the Middle Ages?"; Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*; Schmitt, "Recueils Franciscains d'Exempla et Perfectionnement des Techniques Intellectuelles du XIIIe au XVe siècle."

16.
A final dimension of the term *naskh* that may be useful in this discussion is the concept of *naskh* as transcription rather than copying. If one bears in mind that *naskh al-ʿulūm* often took place while sitting with a teacher and transcribing a book as it was read aloud (rather than copying a manuscript in a library or private study), one may appreciate more fully the relative fluidity of textual composition as the product of this mode of knowledge transmission.

17.
Gacek, "Al-Nuwayrī's Classification of Arabic Scripts."

18.
The manuscripts with the shelfmark DKM 551 are microfilms held at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya. According to a note by the editor of the seventeenth manuscript volume of the *Ultimate Ambition*, the original manuscripts are held at the Ayasofya library in Istanbul, which contains a complete set of thirty-one autographs (see *Nuwayrī*, Nihāya, 19:5–6). However, according to Ayasofya Kütüphanesi, *Defter-i Kütüphane-i Ayasofya*, 210, there are only seventeen manuscripts of the *Ultimate Ambition* held in the collection (shelfmarks 3511–27; note the error in Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, vol. 2, p. 140, who gives 3511–37), some of which are duplicate volumes. This casts some doubt on the *Ultimate Ambition*'s editors' claims that all of the manuscripts microfilmed under shelfmark DKM 551 were autographs. Furthermore, the information regarding the identification of autographs is often incomplete: sometimes the text of a signed colophon is supplied in the edition, while at other times an editor simply states that the edition was based upon an autograph without explaining how they authenticated it. It may be that some of the manuscripts listed in the table are not in fact autographs, just as it is possible that there are some autograph manuscripts extant that are not identified above.

19.
Note that this column refers to the manuscript volume, which does not always correspond to the edition volume. The volume numbers of manuscript and edition are in sync from volumes 1–6. Between volumes 7–13, they begin to deviate, with the following correspondence between manuscript and edition: 7 = 7–8:101; 8 = 8:101–9:223; 9 = 9:224–10; 10 = 11–12; 11 = 13–14:81; 12 = 14:82–15:80; 13 = 15:81–end of 15. From manuscript volume 14 to volume 31, the correspondence is regular, with the edition numbering always two ahead of the manuscript. Thus, the thirty-one-volume manuscript corresponds to a thirty-three-volume edition.

20.
Nihāya, 1:416.

21.
Nihāya, 4:423.

22.
Nihāya, 5:339. Note the error in Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 113, who gives

the month as Jumādā I rather than Rabīʿ I.

23.
Nihāya, 11:iii–iv. Note that the editor states in the preface that this printed volume's edition was based on three manuscripts, one of which was attributed to the author and dated "Jumādā I 922 [*sic*]." I am assuming that this is a typographical error and that the autograph is dated 722. Curiously, however, the editor of volume 12 of the printed edition (which should correspond to the same manuscript volume as volume 11) states that this volume's edition was based on *two* manuscripts rather than three, one of which was an *undated* autograph (see *Nihāya*, 12:iii–iv). Direct consultation of the manuscripts or microfilms would be necessary to sort out this puzzle.

24.
Ahlwardt, *Handschriften-verzeichnisse*, 5:482–83.

25.
The editor of print volume 13 states in the preface that his edition was based on three manuscripts: two complete volumes copied in 966 AH and a fragment of a third manuscript attributed to al-Nuwayrī based on its script. See *Nihāya*, 13:iii–iv.

26.
Nihāya, 15:80, fn. 2.

27.
Nihāya, 15:434–35.

28.
This manuscript is missing about eight folios and has forty folios out of order, as remarked by de Slane, who says that the manuscript "est considéré comme autographe," presumably on the basis of its script. See de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, 1:296–97; cf. Sauvan and Balty-Guesdon, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, 5:122, who says it is "probablement autographe." I am not fully convinced of this identification and would propose that the hand resembles that of Leiden MS. Or. 2c, which has not been identified as an autograph.

29.
Some of the Leiden manuscripts have two volumes bound together under a single shelfmark. In the case of Or. 2d and Or. 2f, the two volumes were copied by different individuals; in the case of Or. 2i and Or. 2l, the copyist is the same.

30.
This manuscript has previously not been considered an autograph, on the basis of a colophon (folio 254b) dated 972 AH and signed by the copyist ʿAbd al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥalabī; see de Goeje and Houtsma, *Catalogus Codicum Arabicorum*, 14; Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, 252; Witkam, *Inventory*, 1:13. However, the colophon is in a very different hand from the main text, which is more or less identical to the hand of several manuscripts attributed to al-Nuwayrī (in particular, Or. 2f, which has a signed colophon).

31.
Nihāya, 17:379; cf. Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 113, who mistakenly identifies this as volume 17, which corresponds to the printed edition's numbering rather than the manuscript volume numbering.

32.
Nihāya, 18:407. Jamāl al-Dīn mistakenly identifies this as volume 18; see previous note.

33.
The colophon of this manuscript is undated. However, while discussing an important relic thought to belong to the Prophet Muḥammad, al-Nuwayrī states that it remained in the possession of its owners "until the present time, which is the last tenth of Dhū al-Qaʿda, in the year 716" (see Leiden MS. Or. 2f, folio 140b).

34.
Nihāya, 19:5–6.

35.
Nihāya, 21:540, fn. 1. Note that the editor gives the shelfmark of this volume as DKM 554 rather than 551, which is puzzling given what the editor of manuscript volume 17 (printed volume 19, pp. 5–6) says about the Ayasofya microfilms being held together under shelfmark 551. See also Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu*, 113, who does not make the same numbering mistake with this volume that she does with volumes 15 and 16 (see above).

36.
Nihāya, 23:5–7.

37.
de Slane, *Catalogue,* 297; Sauvan and Balty-Guesdon, *Catalogue*, 123–24.

38.
The colophon of this manuscript is undated. However, while discussing the Mārinid sultan ʿUthmān ibn Yaʿqūb on folio 68a, al-Nuwayrī states that he "is the current king at our present time, in the year 719." See *Nihāya*, 24:352.

39.
Nihāya, 24:1–3. The edition of this volume was based on three manuscripts, one of which is held in Topkapı (with a microfilm copy at the library of the Arab League). The editor does not provide the shelfmark of the Topkapı manuscript; he identifies it as an autograph based upon a comparison of the script with a copy of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī's *Dīwān al-maʿānī* that is held at al-Maktaba al-Ẓāhiriyya in Damascus and is apparently in al-Nuwayrī's hand. I have not been able to examine either manuscript.

40.
de Slane, *Catalogue*, 297; Sauvan and Balty-Guesdon, *Catalogue*, 123–24.

41.
de Goeje and Houtsma, *Catalogus*, 16; Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 253; Witkam, *Inventory*, 14. The colophon on folio 100a is undated. Interestingly, there is a lacuna in the colophon where the number of the next volume would be, indicating that al-Nuwayrī was still working out the volume numbering of the entire work at this stage.

42.
de Goeje and Houtsma, *Catalogus*, 16; Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 253; Witkam, *Inventory*, 14. The colophon on folio 205b is undated, however there are two places in the manuscript where al-Nuwayrī makes reference to the year in which he is writing (see folios 129b and 142a, corresponding to Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, 27:114, 162). As with the

previous volume (which is bound together with this one under the same shelfmark), there is a lacuna in the colophon where the number of the next volume would be, which indicates that al-Nuwayrī had not yet determined the final numbering of the *Nihāya* at this stage. The colophon reads: *kamula al-juzʾ ʿalā yad muʾallifihi faqīr raḥmat rabbihi / yatlūhu in shāʾ Allāh taʿālā fī awwal al-juzʾ* [lacuna] *al-bāb al- thānī ʿashar*.

43.
de Goeje and Houtsma, *Catalogus*, 16; Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 253; Witkam, *Inventory*, 14.

44.
de Goeje and Houtsma, *Catalogus*, 16; Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 253; Witkam, *Inventory*, 14. The colophon on page 427 is incomplete, stating only: *najuzz al-sifr* [lacuna] *min Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*. As with the two manuscripts bound in Leiden MS. Or. 2i, it appears that al-Nuwayrī had not yet settled on the volume numbering at this stage.

45.
Nihāya, 29:5–6. The edition of this volume was based on a single non-autograph manuscript until the editor found a microfilm of a presumed autograph in the library of the Arab League. Given that the previous two Arab League microfilms were taken from the Treasury Collection at Topkapı, I would speculate that this may have come from that collection as well.

46.
Nihāya, 30:401.

47.
de Slane mistakes this manuscript to be the twenty-fifth volume (*Catalogue*, 298), while Sauvan and Balty-Guesdon consider it to be the twenty-ninth volume (*Catalogue*, 125–26). In fact, BnF Ms. Arabe 1578 contains both volumes 28 and 29. The end of volume 28 falls at folio 104b, where there is no colophon.

48.
The final eighteen folios of this manuscript (including a colophon) were added by a later copyist in 814/1412, but the earlier folios are in al-Nuwayrī's hand. With regard to dating the autograph portion, al-Nuwayrī makes a reference to the appointment of Qaraṭāy al-Ṣāliḥī as governor of Tripoli and says that he remained in this position until "he was removed from it in Jumādā II, 726" (see folio 117b). In the printed edition, however, (see *Nihāya,* 31:59), al-Nuwayrī says that Qaraṭāy was the governor "up until the time that we wrote this volume, and that was at the end of Rajab, 725." In other words, we can be certain that al-Nuwayrī made at least two copies of this volume: one in Rajab 725 (which reflects the text of the printed edition), and this copy, made one year later and updated to reflect the latest developments in the political arena.

49.
de Slane *Catalogue*, 298; Sauvan-Guesdon, *Catalogue*, 126–27. This manuscript has been attributed to al-Nuwayrī on the basis of a signed colophon, and yet the script, page layout, rubrication, and paper of this volume are very different from all the other manuscripts attributed to him, with the exception of Leiden Or. 19b. See below for a discussion of both manuscripts.

50.
de Goeje and Houtsma, *Catalogus*, 17; Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 253; Witkam, *Inventory*,

16. The dating of this manuscript is based on the fact that it chronicles the years 721 to 730. It is in a very different hand from the other presumed autographs with the exception of BnF Arabe 1579. The attribution to al-Nuwayrī is not in a colophon but rather in a comment written on the flyleaves (*tārīkh Nuwayrī* [*sic*] *bi-khaṭṭ al-muṣannif*) in a different hand. See below for a discussion of both Leiden Or. 19b and BnF Arabe 1579.

51.
These are DKM 551, vols. 1, 5, 10, 15, 16, 28; DKM 554, vol. 19; Topkapı 1369; BnF Arabe 1579.

52.
These are Leiden Or. 2f, vol. 16; BnF Arabe 1575; Leiden Or. 2i, vol. 25; BnF Arabe 1578 vol. 29; and Leiden Or. 19b. See the annotation in the endnote for each manuscript for an account of how I arrived at the copy date.

53.
Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu,* 111–14.

54.
Note that Jamāl al-Dīn mistook the 7 Ramaḍān and 27 Ramaḍān manuscripts as being volumes 17 and 18, respectively, rather than 15 and 16. See Jamāl al-Dīn, *al-Nuwayrī wa-kitābuhu,* 113.

55.
See notes to table 5.1.

56.
See notes to table 5.1.

57.
Nihāya, 1:25.

58.
See BnF Arabe 5050, folio 10b; Leiden Or. 273, folio 3b. Johann Jacob Reiske similarly noted this lacuna in the manuscript in his Latin translation of the *Ultimate Ambition*'s table of contents. See Koehler, *Abulfedae Tabula Syriae*, 234.

59.
See chapter 2.

60.
A final possibility would be that Leiden Or. 19b and BnF Arabe 1579 are the true autographs while the rest of the manuscripts held at Leiden and Paris are forgeries.

61.
I am grateful to Adam Gacek and Joel Blecher for their insights on the subject matter of this section.

62.
Ramazan, *Fihris makhṭūṭāt Maktabat Kūprīlī*, 1:183.

63.
The title page (folio 19a) states in ornamental script: "*bi-rasm al- khizāna al-ʿāliya al-*

mawlawiyya al-sayyidiyya al-mālikiyya al- makhdūmiyya al-ṣāliḥiyya."

64.
The first sixteen folios of the manuscript contain a detailed table of contents that is almost surely a later addition. The contents are organized in a tabular format, with five columns of twenty-three rows on each page. Each cell has a short title for the ḥadīth in question and its chapter (*bāb*) number. The foliation (also surely a later addition) restarts in the main portion of the work, on the folio following the title page.

65.
Quiring-Zoche, "How al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* Was Edited in the Middle Ages"; see also Fück, "Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buḫārī's Traditionssamlung"; Mingana, *An Important Manuscript of the Traditions of al-Bukhārī*; al-Yūnīnī, *Mashyakhat Sharaf al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī*.

66.
Quiring-Zoche, "How al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* Was Edited in the Middle Ages," 212.

67.
Nihāya, 32:16–17.

68.
Al-Nuwayrī received his *ijāza* to transmit al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from them in the Manṣūriyya madrasa in Cairo in Jumādā I, 715 AH (August 1315 CE), as he states in the introduction to the manuscript (folio 19b).

69.
Fazıl Ahmed Paşa MS 362, folio 296b.

70.
Ibn Jamāʿa *Tadhkirat al-sāmiʿ*; Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 7–18.

71.
Ibn Jamāʿa, *Tadhkirat al-sāmiʿ*, 29–30.

72.
Ibn Jamāʿa, *Tadhkirat al-sāmiʿ*, 30.

CHAPTER SIX. THE RECEPTION OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

1.
Ibrāhīm Jāmāl al-Kufāt was an enterprising individual who rose from his humble origins as a fruitseller to become a powerful administrator who held, simultaneously and for the first time in Mamluk history, the positions of Director of the Bureau of the Privy Purse and Inspector-General of the Army. Ulrich Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 92; see also see Little, "The Recovery of a Lost Source for Baḥrī Mamlūk History," 49; Rabbat, "Representing the Mamluks in Mamluk Historical Writing," 69–70.

2.
There is evidence of individual volumes being copied from the original manuscript

within a few years of al-Nuwayrī's death, and the author himself mentions a case of a fellow official once writing to him to request a copy of just the first volume of his book. The individual who requested the volume was a Mālikī judge from the city of Fayyūm, one Majd al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Hamdānī (d. 721/1321); see *Nihāya*, DKI: 33:24.

3.
Al-Fāsī al-Makkī, *Dhayl al-taqyīd,* 1:249. For other citations of al-Nuwayrī's chronicle in al-Fāsī's work, see his *Shafāʾ al-gharām bi-akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām*, 2:229, 232, 233.

4.
Ashtor, "Some Unpublished Sources"; Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," 435; Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography*, 95–96.

5.
Ashtor, "Some Unpublished Sources," 21.

6.
See chapter 2, note 49.

7.
Zakī, *Mémoire sur les moyens propres à determiner en Égypte une renaissance des lettres arabes*, 9; Zakī, *Mashrūʿ ṭabʿ akbar mawsūʿāt ʿarabiyya miṣriyya*, 2. I am grateful to Ahmed El Shamsy for the latter reference, which appeared in his presentation, "The Rediscovery of Mamluk Encyclopedias in Modern Egypt," delivered at the School of Mamluk Studies conference at the University of Chicago on June 24, 2016.

8.
Somogyi, "Index des sources de la *Ḥayât al-Ḥayawân* de ad-Damîrî."

9.
Schmidt, "Johannes Heyman (1667–1737)," 75.

10.
Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerianum of Leiden University Library," 1. See also Vrolijk and van Leeuwen, *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands*.

11.
Vrolijk and van Leeuwen, *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands*, 31–40.

12.
For the citation of al-Nuwayrī in the *Grammatica Arabica*, see Erpenius, *Arabicæ linguæ tyrocinium*, 114.

13.
The 212 manuscripts acquired by Leiden constitute the core of its oriental collection, namely MSS 1-211 and 1221. See Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerium," 4.

14.
Golius aeternas per freta vexit opes ("Golius has brought eternal treasures across the seas"); Huygens, *De gedichten van Constantijn Huygens*, 2:209. See also Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerianum," 4.

15.
Golius's letters are contained in Leiden Cod. Or. 1228 and John Rylands University Library MS Persian 913. For descriptions of the letters, see Schmidt, *A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts in the John Rylands University Library at Manchester*, 314–30; Schmidt, *Catalogue of Turkish Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and Other Collections in the Netherlands*, vol. 4, app. 1; Witkam, *Inventory*, 2:73–86. See also Schmidt, "Between Author and Library Shelf"; Schmidt, "An Ostrich Egg for Golius."

16.
Schmidt, "Between Author and Library Shelf," 32.

17.
Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerianum," 5.

18.
Schmidt, "Between Author and Library Shelf," 33–34.

19.
The exception is Leiden Ms. Or. 273, which was discussed earlier in this chapter and which was acquired by Levinus Warner.

20.
Houtsma, *Uit de oostersche correspondentie van Th. Erpenius, Jac. Golius en Lev. Warner*, 50–53. I am grateful to Arnoud Vrolijk for drawing my attention to this reference.

21.
Al-Nuwayrī ("Nuveirius") is one of the sources listed in the early pages of Golius's dictionary; see Golius, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*, 6b. He is cited repeatedly in Jacobus Golius (ed., trans.), *Muhammadis fil. Ketiri Ferganensis*: 6, 21, 38, et passim.

22.
The manuscripts he bequeathed to Leiden "comprise no less than a thousand items, nos. 269–1199 and 4739–814 of the catalogue"; see Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerianum," 16.

23.
Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerianum," 5.

24.
Drewes, "The Legatum Warnerianum," 7–19.

25.
A collection of Warner's notes and extracts from al-Nuwayrī's work is preserved in Leiden Ms. Or. 1121, entitled *Collectanea geographica*.

26.
On Heyman, see especially Popkin and Chasin, "The Sabbatian Movement in Turkey"; Schmidt, "Between Author and Library Shelf"; Schmidt, "Johannes Heyman."

27.
On the correspondence between Cuper and Heyman, see Popkin and Chasin, "The

Sabbatian Movement."

28.
Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis*, 5–6. I am grateful to Darrel Janzen for his translation of Heyman's lecture.

29.
Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis*, 14.

30.
Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis*, 18–19.

31.
Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis*, 25, 45.

32.
Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis*, 36.

33.
Heyman, *Oratio inauguralis*, 44.

34.
Schmidt, "Johannes Heyman," 77.

35.
Witkam, *Inventory*, 2:127.

36.
Schmidt, "Between Author and Library Shelf," 77–78.

37.
Eskhult, "Albert Schultens (1686–1750) and Primeval Language," 1–10.

38.
Schultens, *Historia imperii vetustissimi Joctanidarum in Arabia felice;* Schultens, *Monumenta vetustiora Arabiae*.

39.
Several of the Paris manuscripts were purchased from the collection of the orientalist and erudite libertine Gilbert Gaulmin (1585–1665); see Sauvan and Balty-Guesdon, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, 5:122–27. Additional volumes made their way to the British Museum, Cambridge, Vienna, the Vatican, Gotha, and the Escorial.

40.
d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale*, 2:641, 657, 697; 3:44, 79, 535. Other partial editions and translations from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be found in Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*; Caussin, *Histoire de Sicile*; Eichhorn, *Monumenta antiquissima*; Gregario, *Rerum Arabicarum*; Koehler, *Abulfedae Tabula Syriae*, 232–34; Rasmussen, *Additamenta ad Historiam Arabum ante Islamismum*; Rasmussen, *Historia praecipuorum arabum regnorum*, 81–124; Reiske, *Primae lineae historiae regnorum*; Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*; von Riedesel, *Voyages en Sicile*; and many others. I am grateful to Claude Gilliot for his guidance on the matter of the work's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reception.

41.
Guichard, *Niebuhr in Egypt*, 16–17. I am grateful to Ken Haynes for drawing my attention to Michaelis and his connections to Schultens and the Royal Danish Arabia Expedition.

42.
Michaelis, *Fragen an eine Gesellschaft Gelehrter Männer*. See also Guichard, *Niebuhr in Egypt*, 27–36.

43.
Guichard, *Niebuhr in Egypt*, 32.

44.
On the concept of the "history of the history of encyclopedism," I am inspired by a talk given by Peter Miller at the John Carter Brown Library entitled "What Might a History of Antiquarianisms Look Like?" (Nov. 3, 2015) in which he discussed the concept of "the history of history of history."

45.
Krachkovskiĭ, "al-Nuwairī," *EI1*.

46.
Salisbury, *Inaugural Discourse*, 29–30.

47.
There are important exceptions; see, for example, Blachére, "Quelques réflexions"; Miquel, *La littérature arabe*, 84–95.

48.
Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, 448.

49.
"The Mongol invasion and devastation meant an irretrievable loss and decline for Arabic science and literature . . . Accordingly, the general character of Arabic literature also underwent a radical change. There were few evidences of creative science. It is true that great scholars were active in all the fields, yet they undertook more collecting and compiling work, rather than independent research work. All over the period extending from the 7th/13th to the 11th/17th century encyclopaedists came more and more into the foreground." Goldziher, *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature*, 141–42.

50.
Gibb, *Arabic Literature*, 142. See also Wiet, *Introduction á la Littérature Arabe*, 243; Gabrieli, *Storia della letteratura araba*, 255–76, a chapter on the period stretching from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, simply titled "La Decadenza."

51.
My discussion of Aḥmad Zakī is indebted to Ahmed El Shamsy, who shared with me sections of his forthcoming monograph on the editing and printing of classical Arabic works in the modern Middle East.

52.
Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, 455.

53.
Zakī, *Mashrūʿ ṭabʿ akbar mawsūʿāt ʿarabiyya miṣriyya.*

54.
El Shamsy, "The Rediscovery of Mamluk Encyclopedias in Modern Egypt."

APPENDIX A:
THE CONTENTS OF THE *ULTIMATE AMBITION*

1.
Note that this chapter and the following one are the only places in this table of contents where al-Nuwayrī provides a level of detail beyond the chapter level. While such smaller divisions are found throughout the *Ultimate Ambition*—sometimes even penetrating to the fifth-order level—al-Nuwayrī does not provide an exhaustive account of all the divisions in his work.

2.
There is a lacuna in the manuscript here; see chapter 5.

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